23

THE ORTHODOX WORD

CHRISTMAS, 1968

SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS

BLESSED FATHER HERMAN'S

SPRUCE ISLAND

THE ORTHODOX WORD

A BIMONTHLY PERIODICAL

1968 Vol. 4, No. 6 (23)

November - December

Established with the blessing of His Eminence the late *John (Maximovitch)*, Archbishop of Western America and San Francisco, Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

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Printed by the Father Herman Brotherhood.

Text set in 10-point Garamont type, titles in 18-point Goudy Bold.

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Copyright 1968 by Orthodox Christian Books & Icons.

Published bimonthly by Orthodox Christian Books & Icons. Second-class postage paid at San Francisco, California.

Yearly subscription $4.00, two years $7.00; individual copies 75 cents.

All inquiries should be directed to:
ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN BOOKS & ICONS 6254 GEARY BLVD. SAN FRANCISCO CALIFORNIA 94121

THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

GLORY TO GOD *in the highest, and on earth peace in men of good will,* sang once the Angels of God in heaven.

Almost 2000 years have passed since then, and on earth there continue to be discords, wars, robberies, quarrels, and licentious deeds. And to many it seems as if the angelic hymn had never resounded in heaven, but was invented by men who inserted their own hopes into it; for there is no peace on earth, there is no good will in men, and, consequently, there is likewise no glory of God, there are no angels, there is no God.

But those who think thus are cruelly mistaken, as well in their conclusions as in their understanding of that which the Angels glorified. For although the Angels, singing a hymn of praise, used words which are often heard on earth, they did not speak of anything earthly.

Men desire glory and peace here, on earth; they desire every good for themselves here, in this earthly life. But it was not of earthly glory and not of ordinary peace that the Angels sang.

There is not and there will never be on earth either eternal glory or lasting peace. Glorious alone is the Blessed and Only Mighty King of

[*Continued on p. 280*]

+ Archbishop John Maximovitch

Archbishop John Maximovitch

Shanghai, 1935

Icon by Photios Kontoglou

SAINT GERASIMOS THE NEW ASCETIC
1509 - 1579
Commemorated August 16 and October 20

TROPARION, TONE 1

Let us faithful praise the divine Gerasimos,
who is revealed to us as a protector and champion of the Orthodox,
and an angel in the flesh,
and a God-bearing wonderworker.
For he worthily received from God the unfailing gift of healing,
to restore the sick and heal those possessed with demons.
Therefore he granteth healings
to those who honor him.

The Life has been translated and illustrations furnished by
Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, Massachusetts

The Life and Endeavors of our God-bearing Father

SAINT GERASIMOS, THE NEW ASCETIC

Whose grace-bringing and incorrupt relics are found on the isle of Cephalonia

GERASIMOS, THE SHINING STAR of the Church of Christ, the adamantine stone on which are crushed the heads of all those who deviate from the infallible tradition of our most Holy Orthodox Faith, was born in the year 1509 in the village of Trikala in the Peloponnesus, of the illustrious family of Notaras. His father's name was Demetrios, and his mother's Kale. From his tender youth he was given over to the study of sacred letters, and being endowed with intelligence and a good volition, within a few years he advanced substantially in his studies.

Wise and prudent from his youth, the Saint gave himself over to the reading of the holy Scriptures, wherein he found abiding and edifying truths which brought joy to his soul and made him understand the deception and error which is to be found in the vain studies of human wisdom so-called. From the Scriptures also he came to understand the vanity and error of this deceitful world. Hence, he directed all his longing and search to Him Who alone is the summit of every good, that is, to his Fashioner and God. Being wise, he saw that his homeland, family, glory, wealth, the praise of men, the heat of youth, the violence of the passions were all exceedingly great obstacles to achieving such a purpose. And so, when he came of age, with a manliness of soul rare in our days, he turned his back on all these things, accounting wealth, glory, pleasures, parents and relatives as rubbish, and like a swallow escaping from the snare, fled from his country and went to the isle of Zakynthos.

Thus Gerasimos showed himself to be a true imitator of Abraham, who obeyed God when He told him, "Go forth from thy land, and from thy kindred"; for Gerasimos likewise left his land and kindred that he might be able more easily to find Him for Whom he longed and to Whom all his desires looked. He knew that in order to attain to Him he had to cast away every bodily tie and every cause that, one way or another,

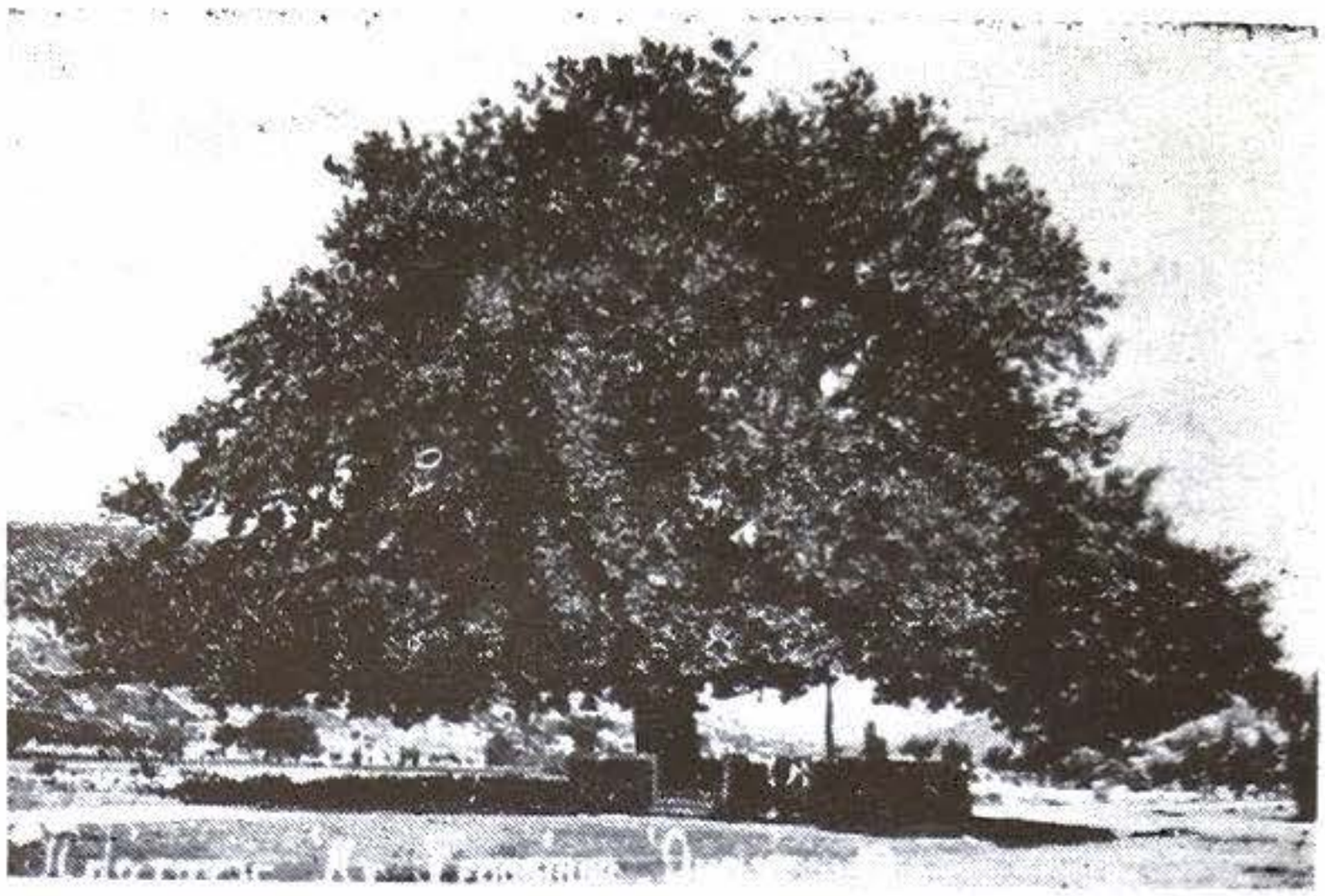
might draw him away and drag him forcibly down into earthly and carnal thoughts, and thus estrange him from his spiritual endeavor and impede the soaring of his mind to his only Fashioner and God. For the Lord dwells not in souls that accept carnal and vain thoughts, and which consequently are rendered unworthy of the indwelling of His grace. God fashioned man for Himself, and He granted all things to man so that by means of them he might be able -- providing he came to knowledge -- to use them well and take delight in his Fashioner, the supreme goal of man.

Having considered these things well, therefore, Gerasimos, like a chosen vessel, set his heart on high. After he had spent some time on Zakynthos, through suffering and asceticism the Saint was freed from every temptation of thoughts concerning country, relatives, wealth and every other care. Thus he began to ascend the ladder of the virtues, whose first step is estrangement from one's own fatherland, and consequently he was freed from the stronger ties and causes which draw man into worldly considerations.

NOW WHEN THE SAINT had well considered that the snares of our common enemy, the devil, are many and diverse, he did not trust in himself, but rather desired to find a good guide who would show him the unerring path of virtue. He departed from Zakynthos, therefore, and with longing and spiritual purpose, with labor and bodily toil, went about the various parts of Greece and came to Thessalonika. From there, he proceeded to the Black Sea, to Constantinople, to the Propontis, to Chalcedon and to every other place where he knew that there lived men renowned in virtue and perfect in the ascetical life, teachers in deed, experienced in the life according to God. After he had gathered from each the honey of the God-pleasing life, like a diligent bee, he then decided to go to the Holy Mountain of Athos and live the monastic life there.

When the Saint came to the Holy Mountain, he dwelt together with the fathers, and found many true laborers in the mystical vineyard of Christ who were able to guide others also in the unerring path of virtue, in the life that brings lovers of virtue to the attainment of perfection. The Saint was benefited greatly, and the divine longing for virtue was inflamed even more in his heart. Though he was endowed with all the virtues even before he received the great and angelic habit, yet being obedient to the commandments of all those who had shone as luminaries in this selfsame angelic habit, he too was raised to the heights of the Great Schema.

After this, who can tell the struggles and labors which the righteous one added to his former discipline, that is to say, fastings,



One of the plane trees, still alive, planted by the Saint in Omala

vigils, tears, prayers, the lifting of the mind to God, total dedication of self to God and total estrangement from the world and all the things thereof? Like an angel in the flesh, like a heavenly man, he became a treasure-house of love, meekness, humble-mindedness, peace, sympathy, and all the other graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Like a tower he remained unshaken before all the attacks and temptations of the invisible foe, the devil, who saw that this corruptible and earthly man was about to soar up and receive in heavenly blessedness that station and rank from which he himself had fallen by dint of his pride.

After the Saint had spent a considerable time on the Holy Mountain, and had become a truly chosen vessel of divine grace and a most perfect model of the life according to Christ, he became wholly aflame with divine love and decided to go worship at Jerusalem.

When he arrived at those holy places, you can well understand with what reverence and longing he worshipped and took delight in them, and what great spiritual joy and gladness filled his soul when he beheld and touched the very places in which the desire of his soul, the Lord Jesus Christ, had deigned to be born in the body, to be reared, to suffer, to be crucified, to arise and bring to fulfilment the other awesome mysteries of His dispensation.

And there again, filled with zeal, he travelled to Antioch, to Damascus, and to practically the whole of Egypt and Libya. He well nigh travelled throughout the whole of the East, everywhere seeking and gathering the flowers of virtue, for he always considered himself imperfect and but a beginner.

Let it not seem strange to anyone that our righteous father Gerasimos went about and travelled throughout so many places, as his life reveals. It was not possible that this God-bearing Saint, who unceasingly and noetically chanted to God the words of David, "Thy law is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my paths," could wander about like some lost or unstable man. Rather, he went about in accordance with the Divine will, even as the Apostles were led from city to city in accordance with the express will of the Holy Spirit, as it is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

St. Gerasimos: Icon by P. Vampoule

From some fathers he would receive benefit and thus advance in the perfection of virtue. Others, on the other hand, received benefit from him, and he put many on the path of virtue. In similar fashion other Saints also went about from place to place, in order to see and learn many other disciplines of the monks and hermits, so that with exactness and completeness they might acquire perfection in the monastic life.

After this laborious trek and spiritual harvest the Saint returned to Jerusalem. Being continually afire with love for his most sweet Jesus Christ, and desiring to have a tangible and perpetual remembrance of his beloved Master before him, he wished to serve for one year as a lamp-lighter in the Church of the life-giving Sepulchre of our Lord, and it was here, that he was worthily made illustrious by the Holy Spirit with the most venerable rank of the priesthood.

He was ordained by the blessed Germanos, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and remained with the Patriarch for twelve years, serving his office with fervor and with the ability and dedication which is proper to virtue.

Thus the Saint lived and struggled indefatigably in all things following the divine Apostle Paul who writes in his epistle to the Philippians, *Brethren, I account not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth into those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ.* He did not take his past labors and toils into account, but knew that they who run in the stadium in order to reach the goal and receive the prize do not look back to see how far they have run. Rather, they look ahead continually, and become the more eager as they see that they are approaching the prize that awaits them.

Afterwards the Saint longed to go from Jerusalem to the Jordan River in order to worship there. Thus with the permission of his elder,

the Patriarch, he went and stayed there some days, and visited the holy places round about the Jordan, where so many of our God-bearing fathers struggled and shone forth.

While there, the blessed Gerasimos was deemed worthy -- even as many other Saints have been -- to accomplish, by the grace of God, the forty-day fast, that is, to partake of no food or drink whatsoever for forty whole days and nights. Thus he was shown to be truly wondrous and a most perfect model of the life according to Christ, a dwelling-place of Divine grace. Furthermore, he thus demonstrated clearly that *Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and unto the ages*, and in addition, proved that Divine grace is given both now and always to all those who seek it with sincere faith and humbleness of spirit, and who follow the commandments of God faithfully. For the promise of the Lord is not false, which said, *Behold, I am with you all the days, even to the end of time.*

The seasons and times, then, in which we live are not at fault, beloved. Rather, the fault lies in our evil volition, in our ignorance and in our little faith in Him. We prefer the corruptible and fleeting and deceptive things of this world to that which is incorrupt and eternal. We are altogether attached to these things because they are perceived by our senses. As for things heavenly, spiritual, and eternal, we do not bring them to mind at all. How, then, is it possible for Divine grace to dwell in such souls and hearts? *My Spirit shall not dwell in these men*, said God to Noah, *because they have become altogether flesh*, and there where grace is not to be found, there also virtue cannot be attained to, most assuredly, even as the Lord Himself has said, *Without Me, ye can do nothing.*

But this blessed one both sought out God with all the fervor of his soul and also fulfilled His Divine Will diligently and steadfastly. With the humility that is true and proper for one who is but a servant and a creature, he sought Divine grace, and was therefore deemed worthy of being glorified by God. In him was confirmed the promise of the Lord, Who said, *He that believeth in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do.*

Filled with the Holy Spirit, the divine father returned to Jerusalem, and after a short time, being moved by Divine grace, besought his elder to grant him permission to depart. Knowing the Saint's virtue and holiness, the Patriarch gave him permission to go wherever Divine grace led him, so that he might benefit others also.

FROM JERUSALEM, therefore, the righteous one went to Crete, and after he had rested there for a short time, he came once again to Zakynthos. While ascending the mountains of that island, which are found

on the coasts facing west, he found there a small cave above the sea in a precipitous place. Here he remained five years, living the ascetical life and practicing virtue. Alone, he conversed with God alone, and with Him alone was he found. The wildness of that harsh and nearly impassable locale -- which to this very day is named for the Saint -- is such that by itself, with no necessity for words, it gives us to understand the angelic life and endeavors of this righteous man. For the whole five years he spent in that cave he ate nothing but a little boiled and unsalted squash, and pulse that had been soaked in water. Like certain of the renowned ancient saints, and especially our righteous father Theodosius the Coenobiarch, he did not eat bread for the space of thirty years.

How great was the amazement which the Saint's angelic life caused to all! How great was the spiritual joy and edification which he brought to many! Like a sacred vessel of the Holy Spirit and like a pure dwelling place of Divine grace, his continual companion was virtue. Ennobling lowliness of mind was well-rooted in his soul; for this alone is the true guardian of virtue, and it alone can bring the creature near to its Creator. Wherefore also, knowing full well the many and diverse snares of the devil and desiring to flee from the causes of pride, the Saint decided to depart from this place.

From Zakynthos, therefore, the Saint came finally to the island of Cephalonia, where it was the good pleasure of God that he should dwell and afterwards be perpetually enshrined as its guardian and ready helper. After his arrival he chose as his dwelling a certain cave above the village of Argostolion, in the place commonly called Spelaion, the name also of a neighboring village. There he remained for eleven months.

This cave is preserved to this day and still bears all the evidences of the Saint's habitation. Later on, out of reverence for the righteous one, the Christians built a little chapel in the northern part of the cave to the glory of the Saint. There can be seen lying on the stone the mat, now greatly aged, upon which the Saint slept, and there are many other signs of his habitation there as well. Many Christians gather there in the chapel and the cave, and they celebrate the Saint's feast twice a year.

Since the place is near the village of Argostolion, the wondrous life and great virtue of the Saint could not be hidden for long. His fame spread quickly, and all ran to see him. The Saint therefore saw that here it was impossible to enjoy the silence for which he longed. For he wished to be found with Christ, his only desire, and to converse with Him noetically. Thus he decided to leave and go in search of some quiet and untroubled spot that was according to his desire. And the Lord, Who does the will of them that fear Him, fulfilled his godly desire.

THE LIFE OF ST. GERASIMOS

ACCORDING TO ancient tradition, Omala, where the Convent of St. Gerasimos is found, was formerly wild and uncultivated. This whole area was forest. On the opposite side, higher up, was the village of Balsamata. In this village there was a certain priest-monk Nicholas who had two unmarried sisters who lived as nuns. He had a church also in this village, where he was parish priest. The location of the Saint's convent can be seen clearly from where they lived, serving God.

One night, as the priest-monk Nicholas was going to the church for the service of Orthros, he saw a light in the aforesaid forest. At first he paid no heed to it; but after he continued to see it many times, he decided to go by day to see if he could find the source of the light. He went, therefore, and examined the area where the old monastic church is today, which was built by the Saint and is honored with the name of the Dormition of our Lady Theotokos. The Saint's grave is there also, and above it is the shrine with his most holy and wonderworking relics. There in a crypt the priest-monk found a holy icon of the Most Holy Theotokos.

After the discovery of this holy icon, this same priest-monk built a little church in the place where the icon was found, and he himself would serve there. His sisters also would come down from the village of Balsamata and lived the ascetical life there by the little church. At that time neither these blessed women nor anyone else understood that this was a supernatural act and miracle of Divine grace which foretold and prepared for the Saint's coming. For grace had ordained Gerasimos as protector of the island of Cephalonia, and it was here that the Saint fulfilled the measure of his earthly sojourn. It was from here that he soared and went to his Beloved, the most sweet Jesus Christ, and it was here that Divine Providence ordained his holy relics to be enshrined as an inexhaustible treasure of God's gifts for those who run to them with faith.

The report of the finding of the aforesaid holy icon spread throughout the island. Wherefore many -- some out of curiosity and others being moved by reverence -- came to venerate the holy icon that had been revealed in such a strange manner. The righteous one also heard of this discovery, and being moved by Divine grace he too decided to go and see if he could find a quiet and untroubled place according to his desire. For he perceived that in his present abode at Spelaion he could not partake of sacred quiet, since that place was near the village.

When the Saint arrived at the place where the holy icon had been found, the sisters of the priest-monk Nicholas saw him, and immediately they understood from his angelic and venerable countenance, from his

manner and from his melliflous words that he was a God-bearer and vessel of divine grace. Thus with all the longing and fervor of their souls, they said to the Saint, "Come, O servant of God; dwell in this place and we will have you as our spiritual father, and like most submissive children, we will be obedient to you to the end of our days. In this way, we hapless ones will be guided by you so that we too may find the unerring path of salvation, and your righteousness also may be able to enjoy the quiet which you desire." The Saint said to them, "If in truth your brother wants me to come, let him certify this in writing, and then I will come here and cultivate this place to the best of my ability."

Then immediately the sisters revealed the Saint's purpose to their brother the priest-monk, and urged him fervently to grant that place and the forest to Father Gerasimos, the stranger. These are the very words in the letter, which is preserved together with the ledger of the Convent. He was granted authority over the property so that he might cultivate it as it seemed best to him, and after his death, to dispose of it according to his wish.

When the Saint had settled in that place, he began to clear it and to plant fruit trees and a vineyard up to the border of the property that had been granted to him by the priest-monk Nicholas. With his own hands he dug a small well which is still found there today and which bears his name. In spite of the fact that an active well is not to be found in the area of Omala, this well unfailingly gushes forth with abundant water. Indeed, in time of drought, when the other parts of Omala are totally bereft of water, the Saint's well gives forth its water generously, both for the inhabitants of the whole area and for their livestock as well. This has happened many times, as all confess with one voice.

There is yet another wondrous thing that occurs with this well which transcends every natural explanation. We ourselves have seen it with our own eyes, and many others have seen it many times, and they confess it openly with one accord. From the beginning, on the two feast days of the Saint there has always been a procession with the case which contains the Saint's relics. At one point in the procession, the priests who are carrying the reliquary set it down so that the customary prayer may be made. At that very moment, the water ascends to the very lip of the well. When they lift the holy relics from that place, the water descends to its customary level. Many, however, having anticipated this, are at the well before the water begins to descend and they draw the water into a vessel, or else they take it with their hands or soak a handkerchief with it.

Shrine with the relics of St. Gerasimos, in the convent which he founded on the island of Cephalonia

Yet because this miracle does not always occur, many have doubted it, and they try to say that even I did not see it, whereas I have gone next to this well during the time of the prayer when the Saint's relics are set down upon the well. Be it therefore known to you who in your pride question the things of faith, that God, because of the unbelief of some like yourselves and for reasons which he alone knows, does not permit this miracle to occur every time. Just because you and those like you have not seen it, this does not mean that it does not happen. *Let no man enter tempting the spotless Faith.*

AFTER THE SAINT had begun the cultivation of that wild and unproductive place, the wicked devil, fearing the result of his labors, gnashed with his teeth against the Saint. Yet since he was unable to hinder him directly (because the righteous one, through his God-pleasing life, was a living vessel of the Holy Spirit, altogether filled with Divine grace), the evil one sowed tares of jealousy in the priest-monk Nicholas. For when the priest-monk saw that the place which he had granted to the Saint was now cultivated and bringing forth fruit, he repented that he had given it. He was further incited in this by the other villagers and neighbors -- most assuredly out of the malice of the wicked one -- so that he might hinder the spiritual benefit that was to be and so that he might grieve the Saint. Thus all the neighbors, and especially the priest-monk, brought many temptations and trials upon the Saint.

Procession with the relics of St. Gerasimos, being carried over the afflicted, on his feast day, Oct. 20. On this day countless miracles have taken place over the centuries -- until 1966, when a Roman Catholic cleric was given an honored place at the services, and for the first time not a single miracle was performed by the Saint.

The blessed Gerasimos, however, being experienced in the devices of the devil, knew that all these things originated from that hater of good, so that he might hinder the spiritual profit which he saw was to come about. Therefore the Saint was not troubled at all, neither did he neglect his God-pleasing labor, but prayed about this to God. In this manner he continued his work with meekness and peace of soul, being altogether dedicated to God Who knows all things and is able to bring them to pass, and thus he conquered the tempter.

Both the priest-monk Nicholas and the other villagers came to understand the sanctity of the righteous one and the grace of God that dwelt with him. Therefore not only did they cease from bothering him and leave him in complete charge over that place, but they even came and fell at his feet weeping and fervently asking that he forgive their error. Furthermore, they made a firm promise that each of them would help him according to his ability in this God-pleasing labor which he had undertaken. With his Christ-like meekness and forbearance, the Saint, with joyful countenance and spiritual gladness, raised them up and blessed and forgave them. He admonished them in those things that were necessary and dismissed them in peace.

Through the working of Divine grace the righteous one was given to understand that, through him, others also were to be benefited. Being informed that it was the will of the Lord that the place be made into a

convent to the glory of God and to the edification of many souls, he began renovating the small church built by the priest-monk Nicholas. Beginning from new foundations, he built the church to be seen there today, dedicating it to the feast of the Dormition of our Lady, the Theotokos. He built various other cells as well and put an enclosure around them, making thus a complete monastery, and named it New Jerusalem.

In the meantime, the Saint's great virtue could not remain hidden, but his fame spread throughout the whole island. People of all ages and ranks ran to him daily. As one who was truly Christ-like, he received all and all departed replete with the benefit of soul and spiritual rejoicing which they received, both from his angelic appearance and from his mellifluous teachings, and also from his heavenly manner of life. Being constrained to do so, he submitted to the eagerness and desire of those who ran to him and besought him with fervor. Thus, together with the two sisters of the priest-monk Nicholas he received others as well, and the number of the nuns came to 25. As for the nuns, they rejoiced in spirit and with their whole soul thanked the compassion of God which had provided them with such a person as their spiritual father and practiced teacher of the life in Christ. Henceforth the Saint kept watchful vigil over the rational flock which Divine Providence had entrusted to him.

He taught them daily; sometimes he would explain to them how to guard themselves and how to recognize and flee the evil devices and enticements of our common enemy, the devil, who had great malice against them, especially now, seeing that they had received the angelic Schema. Concerning the angelic Schema, he taught them that if they stood fast in their rule of life, they would become heirs of every eternal and good thing from which Satan himself had fallen on account of his pride. On other occasions, he showed them the true path which was able to bring them to Paradise. He pointed out to them how in order to win Paradise they had renounced every vain and corruptible thing which this deceitful world had promised to them, and that only in this manner could they put on the sweet and light yoke of Christ, the true Bridegroom of the soul. On yet other occasions he taught them the degrees of virtues, and how true workers of virtue advance gradually. For the spiritual virtues cannot be acquired except through sincere love for God and neighbor, through meekness of spirit, through bodily labors.

These things did the Saint teach his spiritual children daily. He taught much more by his own example, by his angelic life and manner, for this is the true teaching. It has more power to incite the beholder to seek for virtue, which is not so for one who only hears, for we believe our eyes more than our ears.

THE HEAVENLY LIFE of this divine father showed him to be one who was worthy of great boldness before God, and one who had received the grace of miracles. He became an inexhaustible well-spring of healings and a helper in afflictions, and an ardent intercessor for those who called upon him fervently and for those who ran to him with sincere faith. This is apparent from the few things which we must narrate without fail, so that we may not leave the Christians and those that come after us in ignorance, and thus deprive them of spiritual benefit.

At that time, the island of Cephalonia was suffering from a great drought. In those times this was a terrible evil, since the island had but a few vineyards, and the income of the people depended almost entirely on various types of cereal plants and grasses. The inhabitants ran unto God with supplications; yet time passed and the evil was threatening to destroy the crops utterly. Then the extreme compassion of God gave the command, both in order to heal the great evil and also to reveal the audience which Gerasimos had received in the presence of God through his faithful labors. With one accord all cried that if they did not hasten to the righteous Gerasimos, and if he did not beseech God, there would be no correction of the present affliction.

Thus from every part of the island they ran as though they were one to the righteous man, who was the only hope left to them, so that he might deliver them. They besought him fervently not to abandon them, but to intercede in their behalf with Him that is able to heal that terrible plague. The Saint received them joyfully; he heard them and sincerely grieved with them in soul. But when he heard their request of him, his utter humility caused him to draw back and to excuse himself, for he considered himself a sinner and unworthy to be so bold before God. He remembered the saying of the divine Maximos, "The struggle to free oneself of vainglory is not small." But his humility only increased the fervor and hope of the people, and, to be brief, the Saint was finally convinced. He knelt weeping, and with faith and fervor besought the Creator to have mercy on His creation, to overlook the faults of His children, and to open the gate of His favors and have mercy on His people. And truly, God hearkened unto the prayer of His slave, and his request was fulfilled; the audience which the righteous Gerasimos had in the presence of God was made manifest and was certified by all. The thirsty earth was satisfied; the plants were refreshed; the grieving people were comforted and with their whole soul glorified the compassion of God and thanked the Saint as was meet. Each returned to his house rejoicing, with a loud voice proclaiming the Saint's holiness and his boldness before God.

A folk icon of the Saint's repose

Thus, living the angelic and heavenly life, the Saint was henceforth shown to be an unmercenary healer of the sick, and a most wise physician and teacher for all suffering from bodily diseases, or from catastrophes and afflictions of this life, or from sins and ailments of the soul. All who ran to him departed healed and comforted. And assuredly, it was apparent that Divine compassion had sent the Saint to the isle of Cephalonia as a heavenly gift and treasury of the benefactions of God's compassion. Especially, he received great authority over demons, whom he chastens invisibly and wondrously casts out of those possessed by them.

YET THE TIME arrived for the righteous one to depart from this fleeting life and pass over to the eternal and unending, so that he might enjoy more purely and more closely Him Whom he had loved with his whole soul from his youth. With steadfast persistence he had struggled to possess God and be possessed by Him. He had shown great courage in every adversity and combat with those three fierce enemies of man -- the flesh, the world, and the devil. In times lacking in examples of an angelic and superhuman life, he was deemed worthy of such grace and might from God as to reach the foremost saints of our Orthodox Church in divine gifts from God. Thus when he was 70 years of age, or a little over, he received a divine revelation that the time of his departure had arrived.

With humility and gratefulness, the Saint thanked his Creator that He had deemed him worthy, through His grace, to pass the time of this fleeting life in accordance to His divine will. As a loving father and a good and faithful shepherd, he called his beloved spiritual children, and with his customary meekness and joyfulness he revealed to them that the

time of his departure had come. He instructed them not to be troubled nor to grieve over this, but rather to rejoice, for if he found boldness before the Creator in the heavenly Kingdom, he would be able to visit and care for them even better than if he were near them here below on earth. Then he admonished them always to keep well in remembrance the promises which they made to their heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, when they put on the angelic habit. He counseled them to strip themselves of every bond with this corruptible and vain world and to cleave only to their love and desire for the Saviour, and to preserve their monastic rule and typicon unaltered, even as he had surrendered it unto them.

He admonished them also to have, above all else, love and concord among themselves, to have always before their eyes the utter humility and forbearance of their heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, and to consider themselves sinners even to their last breath and always to call themselves unworthy handmaids of Jesus, their Bridegroom. Finally, if Divine grace deemed them worthy to accomplish some God-pleasing labor or virtue, they should attribute it all to the grace of God and to His compassion which gave them the strength to achieve it, and not to themselves, since evil and sin is man's, whereas good and the virtues are given and bestowed freely from God alone, even as He Himself has told us, *Without Me, ye can do nothing.*

After he had comforted and strengthened his spiritual children with these and other words, the Saint blessed them, and with joy and gladness surrendered his blessed soul into the hands of his Creator and Fashioner. So faithfully and diligently had he labored for the Saviour during his lifetime that he was deemed worthy to hear that longed-for voice, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant... enter into the joy of thy Lord.* Of the seventy or so years which the Saint lived in this corruptible life, nineteen were spent at his venerable Convent which he built from the foundations up and which he set in order and left as a paternal inheritance to his spiritual children which would live down through the years, even as his testament sets forth in detail. His blessed repose took place in the 1579th year of the Incarnate Dispensation, on the 15th of August.

Since the august Dormition and translation of our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos, is celebrated on this day, the service of the Saint's repose is chanted on the 16th of the same month. The service of the recovery of his grace-gushing relics, which took place under the supervision of the patriarchal exarch in the year 1581 when Kyr Jeremy sat on the apostolic throne of Constantinople, is chanted on the 20th of October.

Because, however, many of the enemies of our spotless Church (*i.e.*, the Venetian Roman Catholic overlords) were moved to speak words of condemnation and blasphemy, on this account the sacred relics of the Saint were buried again at the recommendation of Kyr Gabriel, the blessed Metropolitan of Philadelphia, and were left in the earth for another eight months. Then the holy relics were uncovered again. To the eternal shame of the enemies of the Faith and to the everlasting joy of the Orthodox, not only were the sacred relics again found whole and intact together with the sacred vestments with which he had been buried, not only did they breathe forth an inexpressible and wondrous fragrance, not only did they bear on themselves all the manifest signs of sanctity and Divine grace, but in addition they became a source of many signs and wonders which the Saint worked and continues to work for those who run to him with faith and reverence; for it was not possible that his great virtue and holiness, nor the power of grace which dwelt in him, should remain hidden. The holy relics were buried for a total of 2 years and 8 months.

WHAT TONGUE can narrate or what pen is sufficient to describe the miracles that took place and unceasingly continue to take place for those who hasten to venerate the Saint's sacred relics with faith and call upon his aid with reverence? Who has run to the grace and help of the Saint with faith and piety and has not been showered freely with benefits by this God-given luminary of our Church? Who has not been witness to his many miracles? Who does not acknowledge the God-bearing Gerasimos as a genuine servant of Christ and most wondrous vessel of the gifts and grace of the All-holy Spirit? Who can deny the fact of his protection and help, especially for the isle of Cephalonia which he manifestly preserved unharmed during the time of slavery and which he saved from captivity during the war between the Venetians and Hagarenes, as well as from that fearsome drought? Again and again, at every time of peril and grieveous affliction, he has been shown to be a fervent intercessor and mighty helper and most loving father.

Out of the numberless miracles which the Saint has performed, we shall mention only a few which we have gathered from exact and infallible documents and unimpeachable eye-witnesses. And this we do, first of all, to the glory of God Who is glorified in His Saints, and secondly, out of gratefulness to the Saint, so that later generations might not be ignorant of his many benefits towards us. And finally, we have set forth the record of the Saint's life and miracles to the glory of and boast of our blameless Orthodox Church and to the utter shame of the unbelievers and blasphemers who seek, like ravaging wolves, to scatter the flock of Christ and bring His words to nought, *Behold, I am with you always.*

A short time after the repose of the Saint, there came to the convent a woman who was vexed by an unclean spirit. Having come there for the sake of finding healing, she would go daily and fall before the grave of the Saint and fervently beseech him with many supplications to be freed of that unclean spirit which tormented her so grievously.

One night she was troubled so greatly by the man-hating demon that she was dragged and violently carried along by the movement of that wicked spirit which sought her destruction, and she was cast into the well which is in the inner court of the convent. But as one loving and compassionate, the Saint anticipated this and was there with his ready help. At the very moment when the adversary had cast that poor woman into the well, every nun in the convent heard the sweet and familiar voice of the Saint telling them, "Hurry, the demonized woman is in extreme danger and needs help."

All the nuns rose quickly and searched everywhere carefully, yet they were unable to find the unhappy woman anywhere. But at the inspiration of the Saint they looked down into the well, and -- Oh, the wonder! -- they saw the woman standing on the water as though she were being upheld by someone. She cried to them, "Throw me a rope so that I can come out." They threw her a rope, therefore, and she came out weeping, not from pain, but from joy and gladness and gratefulness to her deliverer. The nuns, who also were weeping and stood around her in amazement, asked her how she had fallen into the well and had been saved unharmed. And she, rejoicing, replied, "My Lady Mothers, as you well understand, it was by the working of the demon that I was pushed and fell into the well. But as soon as I fell in, I saw with my very own eyes a monk who caught me and held me above the water and told me, 'Do not fear; you will suffer no harm, and you have been freed from the unclean spirit.' He spoke these words to me until the moment you found me." Immediately the nuns and the healed woman hastened to the Saint's grave and with tears of joy thanked God and His servant Gerasimos.

IN THE YEAR 1760, when the island was stricken with the plague, the steward of the convent was a certain nun, Akakia by name, who was from the village of Zervata, in the parts of Samis. Her life, even as her name reveals [*akakos*: "guileless"], was virtuous and free of evil, and therefore all the nuns revered and respected her.

One night, Akakia saw in her sleep that she was in the convent's store room doing her customary work. She turned her eyes towards the icon of the Mother of God that was there and saw a monk kneeling before the holy icon and saying to the All-Holy One, "Is it your will, my

Lady, that I chase away the death-bringing plague from this island, over which the compassion and providence of Thy Son and Thy God has appointed me as protector and guardian?" Then Akakia heard a voice which seemed to come from the holy icon and which said to the monk, "Yea, true servant of My God, it is His will that you do this; for I have besought Him concerning this and He has given permission." After this, Akakia saw the monk arise and unwrap a thick cloth which was wound around the staff that he held in his right hand. After he had laid it out, he gathered up with his staff what seemed to be fine strands of cotton from the cloth. When he had gathered it all at the tip of his staff, he went out and scattered it to the wind. At this, Akakia awoke full of joy and gratefulness, and she called all the nuns and told them her dream. Immediately they all ran with joy and tears and chanted the supplicatory canon before the holy icon. They immediately spread the news of the vision so that the terror-stricken people might be comforted and take courage because of the Saint's intervention. But what happened then? Miracle followed upon miracle so that all might be further assured.

A few days before Akakia had seen the vision, a certain woman from the village of Lakethra who was married to the son of John Balsamos Pagulatos, had just returned to her husband's village, Balsamata, after a visit with her parents in Lakethra. On the very night when Akakia saw the dream, this woman also saw a monk in her sleep. In no uncertain terms he told her, "Tomorrow, when you arise in the morning, return without delay to your father's house, lest the whole area be endangered on your account." The woman arose in the morning and told the vision in the presence of all. In order not to disobey and fall into danger herself, she set out for her father's house immediately.

In the meantime, the report of these two visions was spread abroad and was on everyone's lips. The other woman, the wife of John Tsakarisianos of the village of Balsamata, heard these things and refused to believe them. In an audacious manner, she proclaimed openly that both the nuns and the wife of Pagulatos were telling myths and stories. On the following night, she too saw a monk with a staff in his hand. He lifted the staff and struck her on the right side and said to her, "So it is myths and stories that I, by the will of the Theotokos, chased the plague from the island?" The woman awoke terrified and with a pain in her right side, as a proof of the miracle. Wailing and weeping and crying aloud, she confessed the error of her unbelief and her foolish words. Quickly she ran down to the convent and fell before the Saint's reliquary. Lamenting and confessing her sin, she fervently asked forgiveness from the Saint, and also healing of the pain which she still felt in her side.

Hearing the shrieks of the woman, all the nuns ran, and hearing all that had happened to her and seeing the mark of the blow, cried out, "Lord have mercy." Thus there was no longer any doubt that all these things came to pass that the great boldness which the Saint had in the presence of God might be demonstrated and that his powerful and unsleeping protection for the isle of Cephalonia might be shown forth.

All in common, therefore, sent up glory to God and thanks to the Saint because the disease was quenched henceforth and no longer caused anyone harm or evil. Each and everyone was fully assured of the righteous one's sanctity, for even as God himself revealed, the words of the Gospel are applicable to the Saint in truth, "Heal the sick, cast out demons. Freely ye have received; freely give."

IN THE YEAR 1781, they brought to the convent a certain peasant lad named George from the parts of Katouna. He was sorely ill and afflicted and appeared to be insane, but in fact, he was possessed by a demon. At times he became incoherent and great weakness would overcome him as well as paralysis of his whole body, so that he was a wretched and pitiable spectacle to behold. He remained for one year in the convent without receiving any healing for himself.

Then, one day, when the priest who was about to serve the Liturgy that day was going to the church, he saw George sitting outside the church and weeping bitterly. Being moved with compassion, the priest said to him, "What is the matter, George, that you weep?" "What is the matter?" replied he, "I have been here for so long and my condition has not improved at all. I see so many others who came after me and who have received healing and return well to their homes and I, the hapless one, seeing that in so much time the Saint has not shown his mercy to me, how is it that I should not weep and lament?"

Saying these things, the unfortunate boy wept so earnestly that the priest, feeling even greater compassion for him, ran quickly and revealed these things to the spiritual elder of the convent. He too, being moved with compassion, and also being inspired by God most assuredly, called George immediately and said to him, "I also cannot understand this matter regarding you, my child, because, glory be to the Saint, no one who has come here has returned to his house without first having been healed. You yourself have seen how many have come here since you came, and all, to the glory of God and the Saint, have departed well and rejoicing. Is there, perhaps, some sin, my child, which you have not confessed out of forgetfulness or ignorance on your part, and this is the cause that the grace of God is hindered from working for you by the intercessions of the Saint?"

With even more tears, George said to him, "Holy father, I know of nothing else, except that when I was stricken with this illness, I went to one Moslem woman concerning whom all in our village say that she can work many cures. She gave me this amulet to keep." Having said this, he took out the amulet and gave it to the abbot, who unwound it and found a knotted thread inside which was wrapped around a small piece of paper upon which Arabic letters were written. Immediately, then, the elder, still holding the amulet, took the ailing lad by the hand, and together they went and opened the Saint's reliquary.

After he had admonished George as was proper, he told him to prostrate himself with true contrition and ask forgiveness from the Saint. After the Liturgy, when all the nuns and all that were present were gathered together, he made George burn that accursed amulet himself in the presence of all (for many had come that day, to attend the Divine Liturgy, certainly, but also to learn in detail the things concerning George, since word had gone out).

After the Divine Liturgy, all in common chanted the supplicatory canon with reverence and faith, beseeching the Saint to intercede on George's behalf so that he might receive forgiveness and healing from God. Afterwards the abbot again took him, and having made him steadfast in faith, left him there in the church. When all the aforesaid events had taken place, George took courage and was filled with hope, and he stayed in the church praying to the Saint as well as he knew and as well as he could, so that the Saint might show mercy to him.

That very night, while George was sleeping in the church, it seemed to him as though the Saint's reliquary opened and he saw the Saint, who raised his right hand and blessed him, saying, "George, you are healed of your sickness. Only have fear of God and take care henceforth to keep yourself from sin." Immediately George awoke and ran and fell before the holy relics and thanked the Saint with tears. At that very moment the *semantron* sounded for Orthros and the priest came to the church. All the nuns gathered also and they saw George prostrate before the reliquary and glorifying the Saint. When he saw that they had come into the church, he arose immediately and with a clear voice and befitting gratefulness told all of the Saint's compassion on him and of all the things that he had seen in his vision. All glorified God fervently, and from that time on George was healed. He left the next day for his country rejoicing and thanking the Saint and everywhere proclaiming to all the miracle which the Saint had worked for him.

OUT OF THE numberless miracles which the Saint has worked, my beloved Christians, let these be sufficient to satisfy the piety of the faithful. Our divine father Gerasimos has no need of human praises and encomiums; he is sufficiently glorified with the glory of God, which alone is able to fill the soul with true joy and gladness, according to the word of the divine David, *I shall be filled in beholding Thy glory*. All these things that have been written, my beloved brethren, were written for our benefit and instruction. For this cause, we shall be without defense before the terrible judgement seat of God, when after all these examples, after all these indisputable miracles which the Lord God has worked through His saints, we be found ungrateful and unmoved by the benefits which He has bestowed on us so abundantly.

Wherefore, let us take care henceforth to correct our life. Let us not gather at festivals, celebrating as the heathen do with shouts and tumult, eating and drinking, and with adornments of the flesh, for which things we receive not benefits and blessings, but a curse and separation from God and His saints. Nay, rather, let us celebrate with modesty and humbleness of heart. Let us ever be mindful that the form of this world is passing away, that is, that one day we shall descend into the tomb; for we are strangers and sojourners in this world. The present time, brethren, is a time of toil and labor; the time to come is a time of recompense, either of rewards or of punishments. Each one of us shall stand alone before the terrible and unerring Judge Who does not take into account the person of a man. Each one shall come bearing his deeds, whether good or evil, and we shall give an exact account to God concerning the grace and the benefits which He bestowed on us and how we responded to them and used them. Since our miserable life is an unceasing struggle against our three fearsome and deadly foes, that is, the flesh, the world, and the devil, let us seek through our faith and reverence to acquire this radiant light of the Church as an intercessor and mediator with God in our behalf.

Yea, O divine Gerasimos, even as things inform us, thou hast great boldness with God. Do thou entreat Him, by thy supplications which are well-pleasing to Him, that He may deem even us unworthy ones as worthy of His divine grace, whereby we shall be able to escape the snares and attacks of these our three deadly foes, and that we may be able to pass the tempestuous sea of this life in peace, according to His divine will, and that we too, though unworthy, may be accounted worthy of His boundless glory and kingdom. Amen.

THE SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTIONS

TO LAYMEN AND MONKS

Of Our Father Among the Saints

ST. SERAPHIM OF SAROV

XXVII

DISCERNMENT OF THE HEART'S WORKINGS

WHEN A MAN RECEIVES something Divine, in his heart he rejoices; but when he receives something diabolic, he is disturbed.

The Christian heart, when it has received something Divine, does not demand anything else in order to convince it that this is precisely from the Lord; but by that very effect it is convinced that this is heavenly; for it senses within itself spiritual fruits, *love*, *joy*, *peace*, and the rest (Gal. 5:22).

On the contrary, though the devil might transform himself even *into an angel of light* (II Cor. 11:14), or might produce thoughts seemingly good: still the heart would feel a certain obscureness and agitation in its thoughts. Explaining this, St. Macarios of Egypt says: Though satan might produce also visions of light, he is entirely unable to produce a blessed effect: which is the well-known sign of his works (St. Macarios, Homily 4, ch. 13).

And thus, from these diverse workings of the heart a man may know what is Divine and what diabolic, as St. Gregory the Sinaite writes: From the effect one may know whether the light shining in your soul is of God or of satan.

XXVIII

THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

TO RECEIVE AND BEHOLD in the heart the light of Christ, one must, as far as possible, divert one's attention away from visible objects. Having purified the soul beforehand by repentance and good deeds, and with faith in the Crucified, having closed the bodily eyes, immerse the mind within the heart, in which place cry out with the invocation of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; and then, to the measure of one's zeal and warmth of spirit toward the Beloved, a man finds in the invoked name a delight which awakens the desire to seek higher illumination.

When through such a practice the mind enters into the heart, the light of Christ shines, illuminating the chamber of the soul by its Divine radiance, as the Prophet Malachi says: *But unto you that fear My name, the Sun of justice shall arise* (Mal. 4:2).

This light is likewise life, according to the word of the Gospel: *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men* (St. John 1:4).

When a man beholds the eternal light interiorly, his mind is pure and has in it no sensory representations, but, being totally immersed in contemplation of uncreated goodness, he forgets everything sensory and wishes not even to see himself; he desires rather to hide himself in the heart of the earth, if only he be not deprived of this true good -- God.

XXIX

ON THOUGHTS AND MOVEMENTS OF THE FLESH

IF WE DO NOT AGREE with the evil thoughts suggested by the devil, we do good.

The impure spirit has a strong influence only on the passionate, while upon those who have purified themselves of passions he attacks only from the side, or exteriorly.

Is it possible for a man in his youth to burn and not be disturbed by fleshly thoughts? But one should pray to the Lord God that the spark of impure passions may be extinguished at the very beginning. Then the flame of passions will not increase in a man.

ST. SERAPHIM'S SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTIONS

XXX

HEEDFULNESS TO ONESELF

HE WHO IS TRAVELING the path of heedfulness should not trust only his own heart, but should verify the workings of his heart and his life with the law of God and with the active life of ascetics of piety, who passed through such endeavor. By this means one may the more easily both save oneself from the evil one and more clearly behold the truth.

The mind of a heedful man is as it were a watchman on duty, or an unsleeping guard of the inner Jerusalem. Standing at the height of spiritual contemplation, he looks with an eye of purity upon the enemy powers who go around and attack his soul, in accordance with the Psalmist: *And my eye hath looked down upon my enemies* (Ps. 53:9).

From his eye the devil is not hidden, who *as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour* (I Peter 5:8), nor are they who bend their bow *to shoot in the dark the upright of heart* (Ps 10:2).

And thus such a man, following the teaching of the divine Paul, receives *the whole armor of God, that* [*he*] *may be able to withstand in the evil day* (Eph. 6:13), and with this armor and with the cooperating grace of God, he repels visible attacks and vanquishes invisible warriors.

He who travels this path should not heed extraneous reports, from which the head can be filled with idle and vain thoughts and recollections; but he should be heedful toward himself.

Especially on this path one must watch lest one turn to the affairs of others, lest one think or speak of them, according to the Psalmist: *That my mouth may not speak the works of men* (Ps. 16:4); but one should pray to the Lord: *From my secret* [*sins*] *cleanse me, and from those of others spare Thy servant* (Ps. 18:13-14).

A man should turn his attention to the beginning and end of his life; however, toward the middle part, where occur fortunes or misfortunes, he should be indifferent.

To preserve heedfulness one must retire into oneself, according to the word of the Lord: *Salute no man by the way* (St. Luke 10:4), *i.e.*, do not speak without need, unless someone run after you to hear from you something profitable.

Revere elders or brethren whom you meet with bows, having your eyes always closed.

XXXI

AGAINST TOO GREAT SOLICITUDE

TOO GREAT SOLICITUDE for worldly things is natural to an unbelieving and faint-hearted man. And woe to us if we, in taking care for ourselves, do not confirm ourselves in our hope in God, Who takes care for us! If we do not ascribe to Him the visible goods which we use in this present age, how can we expect from Him those goods which are promised in the future? Let us not be such faint-believers, but rather let us *seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added* unto us, according to the word of the Saviour (St. Matt. 6:33).

It is better for us to despise what is not ours, *i.e.*, the temporal and passing, and desire our own, *i.e.*, incorruption and immortality. For when we shall be incorruptible and immortal, we shall become worthy of visible contemplation of God, like the Apostles at the most divine Transfiguration, and we shall be joined in a union with God surpassing the mind, like the heavenly minds. For we shall be like the angels, and sons of God, *being the sons of the resurrection* (St. Luke 20:36).

ORTHODOXY IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

THE "GREAT SYNOD" OF PATRIARCH ATHENAGORAS: THE RESPONSE OF GENUINE ORTHODOXY

1. *Epistle of Metropolitan Philaret to the Ecumenical Patriarch*

IN THE EASTER Encyclical (1968) of Patriarch Athenagoras mention was made of "an addition joy" (besides the Paschal joy): the announcement that "our Holy Eastern Orthodox Church is proceeding toward the convening of a Great Synod, for the purpose of renewal of the Church and the establishment of the unity of all Christian churches." To this end a Preparatory Pan-Orthodox Commission met in June in Geneva.

All this, of course, is nothing new. The Pan-Orthodox Conferences in Rhodes were steps on this same path. Frankly, these conferences have not had great success. Representatives from most Orthodox Churches (with the notable exception of the Russian Church Outside of Russia, banned at the demand of the Moscow Patriarchate) have duly met, but little enthusiasm has been shown for the Patriarch's dreamed-of Council, and there has been little agreement among the participants; and always the representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate have been present to speak the Communist party line, to agitate against Russians outside of their jurisdiction, and to prevent discussion of any question that would offend their atheist rulers.

There is, however, a goal in back of all these preparations: the "renewal" (*i.e*, modernization) of the Church. And it is this that called forth the letter of protest of Metropolitan Philaret to the Patriarch's Easter Encyclical -- the Metropolitan's first open letter to the Patriarch since his magnificent protest against the lifting of the Anathemas in 1965 (printed in *The Orthodox Word*, 1966, no. 1, p. 27; also in *Against False Union*, p. 106).

The Metropolitan's response is one of Orthodox sobriety and warning. Its main points may be summarized and quoted here. "Not every convocation of a Council calls forth joy, and not every Great Council, however many representatives of autocephalous Churches may have attended it, has been honored by the recognition of the Church... For this every new Council must be in full accord with all previous

Ecumenical Councils." The false "Robber Council" of Ephesus is an example of a well-attended Council that was *not* recognized by the Church.

An Ecumenical Council is convened "in order to condemn and eliminate, in agreement with ancient tradition, innovation in the form of arbitrary doctrine, which is the fruit of human pride, of compliance with the mighty of this world, or of accomodation of the Church to a widespread error." The Ecumenical Patriarch, however, has shown no concern to proclaim Orthodox truth in the face of newly-arisen errors, but on the contrary introduces a novelty called "the renewal of the Church" and looks to the union of Orthodoxy with heretodoxy, of truth with error -- a union now known as "ecumenism," which has become the mode of the day for those following the "broad path" of "this world."

We already have before us the example of the Second Vatican Council of the Latin church which, having roughly the same goals as the Patriarch has set forth for his Great Council, aspired not to return to Orthodoxy but rather desired "renewal," accomodation to contemporary society, and ended by introducing modern temptations into her very life with the resulting spiritual anarchy which she now exhibits to the world.

The Russian Church too has experienced the harm of "renovationism" in the form of the "Living Church," which after the Revolution tried to adapt Orthodoxy to Communism; it was rejected by the Russian faithful and, it is to be hoped, will serve as an example for other Orthodox Churches of the path *not* to follow.

And there is another point that already invalidates the proposed Council: "However numerous may be the participants of the Great Council which you have called, it cannot possess an ecumenical Orthodox authority, for at it will not be heard the genuine voice of the Church largest in number of faithful, the martyrical Russian Orthodox Church." Those hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate who pretend to represent the Russian Church have neither right nor authority to do so, being the servants and collaborators of the enemies of the Church. Of this there has been additional ample proof in recent years in the Open Letter of the two Moscow priests, in several letters of the former Archbishop of Kaluga Germogen, and other documents. "Their voice at the Council will not be the free voice of the Church, but in many cases the voice of her enemies who rule over them. Although behind that voice will stand the external prestige of the Russian Church for those who do not know or do not wish to know its true condition -- we who are aware of the true situation of things can attach neither canonical nor moral significance

to any decisions made with the participation of the hierarchy enslaved by the godless."

Once again, with this epistle, the head of the Russian Church Abroad expresses clearly and loudly the voice of the undimmed Orthodox conscience in these troubled times. (*For full text see inside back cover.*)

2. *In View of an Eventual Ecumenical Council*

The following article, by Fr. Basile M. Sakkas, Greek priest of the Swiss Orthodox parish in Geneva, appeared in his bulletin, La foi transmise, *for August, 1968, and expresses the Orthodox conscience with equal directness and clarity.*

Apart from the Apostolic Council of Jerusalem, the Church of Christ has gathered together seven times in Ecumenical Councils and in various other local councils. The Ecumenical Councils were convoked only for an important reason. They were not convoked to make dogmas or to decide whether God is trinitarian or not; rather, the Church, being endangered by the confusion of heresy, came together in council to confess how she had received, from the beginning, the teaching of Divine Revelation, to indicate the line of demarcation between truth and error.

But here a question arises: what is today the new heresy that menaces the Church and against which she has not already taken a position, so that the convocation of a new council would be necessary? Almost everyone tells us that a new council should be convoked, but they do not tell us *why*. Do we demand councils today, when the situation of almost all the Orthodox Churches is so delicate, when Church and State are so influenced by politics and diplomacy? While we are incapable of applying in our life the teaching of the first seven councils, shall we seek an eighth? Or is it in order to be in fashion, having a complex with regard to Rome? Some say that our canons have need of revision (*aggiornamento*) because they are medieval! Really, that will not go over with us. With her canons the Church has lived for almost 2000 years, and she will live until the Second Coming of Christ. With her canons the Church has revealed a multitude of saints, martyrs, ascetics, confessors, doctors, and so many other men of God; she has viewed slavery, persecution, death; she has shed rivers of blood, while waiting for us, us... the enlightened ones of the 20th century, with our snobbism, to revise her canons!? Today it is long hair that embarrasses us; tomorrow it will be beards. One will have to make official the Papal calendar, change the canon concerning Easter, pray and sympathize with heretics, marry the bishops, abbreviate the services and the fasts, in order to appear as cultured men with a progressive spirit!

Do you want a council? Make one, then. The Lord's people will put it in the archives together with that of Florence.

Let us never forget that Orthodoxy has a conscience.

MISSIONARY CORRESPONDENCE

THE AFRICAN GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

1. From Kenya

THE PEACE and joy of our Saviour Jesus Christ be with you.

I read with great attention your article, "The African Greek Orthodox Church" (issue of July-August, 1968). In general, the information therein is accurate, and I must thank you for your earnest assistance and cooperation with such publications, so that our missionary work here becomes known to universal Orthodoxy.

This work, though the Greeks were first called, belongs to all Orthodox people, and it must be made known to all, must be loved by all, and must be helped in every way.

The only defect of this wonderful article is its partiality in its whole inclination towards Uganda's side. Besides Frs. R. Spartas and O. Basajjakitalo, the first leader of the African Orthodox in Kenya, Fr. Arthur Ghathuna, of the Kikuyu tribe, is not mentioned at all.

Fr. Ghathuna started his church leadership at the same time as the other two and was ordained by the same "Archbishop Alexander Daniel," and was recognized like the others by the Patriarchate of Alexandria. From the beginning he developed quite an activity for the spreading of Orthodoxy, and in spite of the desertion of some of his first coworkers, he remained faithful and works up to this day. He fought with courage for the independence of his country, and remained for nine consecutive years in concentration camps.

Now please allow me to introduce myself to your brotherly love. I am the Fr. Chrysostom (Archimandrite Chrysostomos Papasarantopoulos) whom the young Orthodox Englishman Mr. John Harwood, a friend of mine in Christ, mentions (part III), representing me as the parish priest of the Nairobi Greeks. I am 65 years of age.

No, dear friends and brothers in Christ! I am not a parish priest, neither have I come to East Africa for the sake of Greeks. I simply serve them, as they have no priests, and I myself on many occasions send African Orthodox priests who speak Greek to serve them.

I have given up my good and very profitable position, and all the comforts of a life in the center of Athens, and all the facilities of the present life, and come out here, *bound in the spirit* (Acts 20:22), only for

the sake of our African newly-Orthodox brothers, who were asking for someone to come and show them the pure, unblended Christian Orthodoxy.

On the 2nd April, 1960 I left Athens, and after a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and a short stay in Egypt, near the late Patriarch Christophoros, I reached Nairobi on the 21st May, 1960. The Most Reverend Nicolaos, Metropolitan of Irinoupolis (now Patriarch of Alexandria) welcomed me with great kindness and fatherly love. As he was bound to higher church duties because of the illness of the late Patriarch Christophoros, and being obliged to remain mostly in Alexandria, he intrusted me to represent him fully, especially in the care of our newly established Church of the African Orthodox.

With his fatherly blessings I transferred the main seat of the Archbishopric to Kampala. There, after my arrival, with the donations of the Greeks of East Africa, was built the holy church of St. Nicholas, near the schools of Fr. Spartas, replacing thus the little hut which had been used as a holy church. Near the church we built a small monastery, by donations of my innumerable friends in Christ, and acquaintances of mine in Greece. There I lived with Fr. Nankyama, who took the direction of the schools of our Mission.

For six years I worked hard, having Kampala as my center. Accompanied by one of the two Greek-speaking priests, Frs. Theodorous Nankyama and Irineous Magimbi, we went on long tours throughout the three countries of East Africa. Later on, through the mercy of God I learned well the Swahili language, and so went on the tours accompanied by the elderly Fr. Obadiah Basajjakitalo, a holy man.

But my labor for spreading Orthodoxy in Uganda was not fruitful enough. Much labor and very little success. I was especially disappointed that a movement of Orthodox Christian youth could not be organized, in spite of all my efforts.

On the other hand, Kenya was advancing with galloping speed. Every time I toured there I was satisfied. So two years ago I decided to transfer the main center of our missionary work, and also the seat of the Archbishopric, to Nairobi.

As soon as I settled, on the 6th August, 1966, the Orthodox Christian Youth Movement of Kenya was founded. Today about 500 Kenyan boys and girls are members.

Our financial help comes mainly from pious Greeks of Greece and overseas. There are also a few Orthodox of other nationalities who help us. Our African Orthodox have great needs, and very few among them can contribute. They need churches and schools. Usually they build

them with wood and mud, and cover them with thatch. Very often we celebrate Divine Liturgy in those hut-churches.

Since I have settled in Nairobi, for the last two years, the St. Eleftherios parish church in Lironi has been fully completed, the St. Panteleimon parish church in Kerwa has been built from the foundations, the St. Paul the Apostle church is being built, and now has reached the height of the dome. This church of St. Paul in Kagira near Nairobi will be the cathedral of Kikuyu Orthodox, and so very costly. The foundations of four more holy churches have been made already in the outskirts of Nairobi.

In Western Kenya the thatch roofs of 22 churches were replaced by iron sheet roofs. And this sort of work is being continued. There are over 50 more churches in need of roofs.

Let no one think, though, that we have given up Uganda. Even before I left there, I opened in the bank a special account, "Uganda Greek Orthodox Church Building Fund," which I supply continuously. I also visit Uganda several times in the year.

I hope to be able soon to visit Geita in Tanzania; perhaps we could be able to give them too some sort of a church, although there is no priest there as yet. Years ago I performed there my first mass baptism, accompanied by Fr. Nankyama.

And so, dear friends and brothers in Christ, I come with all the confidence which my full dedication to our Saviour Jesus Christ gives me, *for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung* (Phil. 3:8), and my love even to death for our new Orthodox of East Africa, to ask you: any donations in money for Uganda, to be sent to: Rev. Fr. Obadiah Basajjakitalo, P. O. Box 3970, Kampala, Uganda; all checks should have *Uganda Greek Orthodox Church Building Fund.* For Kenya: Holy Archbishopric of Irinoupolis, P. O. Box 6119, Nairobi, Kenya; this account, by the blessing and procuration of the Patriarch, I administrate personally and on my responsibility.

I repeat that the Orthodox missionary work here belongs to universal Orthodoxy. I would therefore accept gladly any priests of the monastic order, or simply Orthodox monks, of any nationality, to come and work with me. The only thing that will be required from anyone coming out here is to have his own means of keep, offered by a Church organization. Spiritually they will come under the Patriarchate of Alexandria.

With all estimation and the best wishes in Christ,

Archimandrite Chrysostomos

Nairobi, Kenya
2nd September, 1968

MISSIONARY CORRESPONDENCE

2. *From Uganda*

FIRST OF ALL I personally must thank you very much for your kindness to print an article in your publication, which article has attracted the attention of some people. At this moment two have sent already, in the name of the African Greek Orthodox Church, checks for $20 and $25 respectively, and one has just written a letter which is full of sympathy. I therefore would like to thank you very much for the trouble you took to publish this article, and I assure you that whenever you will do the same, you will have forced us to work hard in order to establish Orthodoxy here in East Africa.

I have just learned that Archimandrite Chrysostomos Papasarantopoulos has read this article and has written to you already. He came here in 1960, being attracted to come here by speeches which I was giving in Greece during my stay there; and when Rev. Fr. Spartas went to Greece he conceived a great desire to come here. He has spent much money in Kenya. He has built new churches in all Kenya villages. Here in Uganda he has given money to Rev. Fr. O. K. Basajjakitalo, and he has built one church building with stones. The cathedral here in Kampala was built by the Greeks of East Africa, and for another church building built by Fr. Obadiah Basajjakitalo, the money was sent to him from West Germany. But these are the only church buildings we have in Uganda, the country which found Orthodoxy, as everyone in Europe knows.

I have been invited to visit the U. S. A. again, and perhaps this time I will be in California...

Rev. Fr. Theodorous Nankyama
P. O. Box 3970
Kampala, Uganda
1st November, 1968

THE NETHERLANDS ORTHODOX CHURCH

IT IS WITH GREAT delight that we have received the Easter 1968 issue of *The Orthodox Word*. Not only are we pleased that the article about us has been published, but also we are especially pleased that you have seen fit to include Hegoumen Adriaan's personal memoirs of Vladiko John in the same issue.

We enclose a copy of a press photograph which may interest you. Recently an elderly Russian died who had been riding-instructor both to Prince Bernhard and subsequently to all the present Dutch Royal Family. Bishop Jacob with his choir was personally invited by Queen Juliana to take the funeral service. Her Majesty was delighted that the whole service was in the Dutch language (so that she could understand and follow it) and all present found the Orthodox burial office very beautiful and moving and obtained fresh insights from it.

In a row behind Bishop Jacob in the photograph are (from left to right): H.R.H. the Crown-Princess Beatrix, Prince Claus (husband of Princess Beatrix), Prince Aschwin (brother of Prince Bernhard), H. M. the Queen, and the Prince Imperial H.R.H. Prince Bernhard. This funeral of a member of the Queen's household has awakened the interest of many Dutch people about Orthodoxy; we pray God that it may be a fruitful witness.

With every good wish,
Yours sincerely in the Lord Christ,

The unworthy Hieromonach David

The Hague
4 June, 1968

P.S. On the Sunday of the Life-Giving Cross I was made priest.

WITNESS OF ORTHODOXY

SCHEMA-HIEROMONK PANTELEIMON
Abbot of Holy Transfiguration Monastery
Boston, Massachusetts

They shall put you out of the synagogues:
yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth
you will think that he doeth God service.
And these things will they do unto you, because
they have not known the Father, nor Me.

St. John 16:2-3

THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY of the Church of Christ it has been pre-eminently the monasteries that have sprung to the defense of Orthodoxy in times when the Faith was threatened by defilement and heresy. Thus the monks defended icon-veneration against the iconoclasts in the 8th and 9th centuries, suffered persecution and martyrdom for their battle against the false unions of Lyons (1274) and Florence (1439), fought for Orthodox Hesychasm against the Latinizing rationalists of the 14th century. And today they are to be found in the front rank in the defense of genuine Orthodoxy against the new unionists.

Monasteries, too, have always been sources of spiritual refreshment and inspiration for the Orthodox flock. In America, the revitalization of an Orthodoxy that had long been losing its character under the influence of American "pluralism" and worldliness, has occurred largely under the inspiration of two monastic centers: Holy Trinity Russian Monastery near Jordanville, New York, and -- in the last eight years -- Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts.[1] The founder, abbot, and spiritual elder of the latter is Schema-Hieromonk Panteleimon.

Of Greek descent, he was born and raised in Detroit, going at the age of 21 to Mt. Athos, where he was tonsured a monk and received the Great Schema. He returned to America with the express intention of founding an Orthodox monastery and transplanting Athonite monasticism to American soil. Since 1960, when it was founded, Holy Transfiguration Monastery under his direction has become not only a genuine

1. For a descriptive account of this Monastery, see *The Orthodox Word*, 1967, no. 1, p. 33.

Orthodox monastery of the strictest type, but also a living center for the actual realization of the "spiritual renewal" of Orthodoxy in America that Orthodox intellectuals and journalists only talk about. Already it exerts an influence far beyond its modest size and means. It has taken the lead in the movement of serious and aware believers into the fold of the Russian Church Outside of Russia, now the only Orthodox Church remaining in America -- and the entire world -- whose hierarchy stands fully behind traditional Orthodoxy and against the approaching "union," and has published the best "apologies" for that Church in the English language (see back cover); it has inspired and helped the new Orthodox missionary movement in America that strives to build on a strict traditional foundation; it has worked for the purity of Orthodoxy as well in its handicrafts -- beeswax candles, fine church incense, distribution and mounting of icon reproductions in traditional style -- as in its letters and translations (many of which have appeared in *The Orthodox Word*) presenting the pure sources of traditional Orthodoxy. Father Panteleimon himself -- although still in his early thirties -- is a spiritual director not only for his own monastery, but also for many of those who visit it and for numerous followers and friends in Greece, where he travels every year.

It is against such men as these that the lukewarm, the apostates and unionists of all ages, have taken arms, denouncing their evangelical zeal as "fanaticism" and seeking to uproot their influence by whatever means possible -- by slander, persecution, martyrdom. It is such people that Archbishop Iakovos of North America doubtless had in mind when he said this year that "while monks have given us our theology and ecclesiastical arts, when you evaluate their services and disservices, you come to doubtful conclusions. I, for one, am inclined to want only the positive services that [married] priests can make" (quoted in *The Vineyard*, 1968, no. 2).

Father Panteleimon has already suffered ridicule and much worse for his persistence and zeal in the service of Orthodoxy. Now, however, his witness for Orthodoxy has produced a stronger and more perilous reaction. He has been, since November 9 of this year, the captive of the Greek government.

On that day, as he was preparing to leave Greece after a visit of some two months, he was stopped at the Athens airport and prevented from departing. His luggage was searched and he was accused of attempting to smuggle out of Greece the religious articles found there: some

icons, old books, and a pewter chalice. Accusations of theft were also made but could not be sustained, since there was proof that all articles had been purchased or donated. Fr. Panteleimon's departure was delayed pending the obtaining of official permission from the Archeological Ministry to export these articles. Despite the fact that the customs office found only one icon of sufficient value to forbid its export (Fr. Panteleimon accordingly donated this icon to the Convent of the Annunciation on Enusai, Chios), the Archeological Ministry delayed its decision until December 2. But before then the real nature of the case, and of Fr. Panteleimon's "crime," began to reveal itself.

Father Panteleimon

On Wednesday morning, November 20, Fr. Panteleimon was summoned by the Archeological Ministry for questioning. A taxi was called for him, but no sooner had it left the Pateras house, where he had been staying, than two men in street clothes forced their way in and took him to a police station. Here he was put in a chair and left for two hours. Then he was taken to the Neo Ionis Security Station where for two more hours he was questioned. He was accused of stealing the right hand of St. John the Russian from Mt. Athos and a wood carving of the Annunciation. He was threatened with physical violence and denied the right to call the American Embassy or a lawyer. Then he was asked (as the religious question finally intruded) why he had changed to the Old Calendar? Who had brainwashed him to become a monk? Finally he was released.

For a second round of questioning he was summoned to the same station the next day; this time his hostess, Mrs. Pateras, insisted on accompanying him. He was forced to remain there this time for eight hours. He was accused of setting fire to the Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Mt. Athos, of having a mistress in Boston to whom he had written of

this, of being the leader of a smuggling ring. Fr. Panteleimon calmly stated the falseness of all accusations and proved that he was in Thessalonika during the fire.

A third round of interrogation, lasting three hours, followed on Friday morning, November 22, during which it was revealed that the accusations against him had been made in a letter from America -- which he was forbidden to see. At the end of this whole ordeal, the police Lieutenant, Mr. Mavroides, said in the presence of Mrs. Irene Pateras, "Father, I have one counsel to make to you. *Have it in good with Iakovos* [Archbishop of North and South America]." To Fr. Panteleimon's question, "Was I brought here to be tried for my faith, or for crimes supposedly committed by me?" he only replied: "Never you mind -- tend to what I said to you." At this time also Fr. Panteleimon was asked in mockery, "How should we addressyou? 'Your Eminence'?" Another said, "No, he should be addressed, 'Your Reverence.' The chief interrogator said with contempt: "He is nothing! He is an Old Calendarist!" As a result of these interrogations, no charges were filed -- their purpose being evidently harassment and nothing else.

After Fr. Panteleimon had been detained yet another week, on December 2 the Ministry of Archeology made its decision: all the articles except two icons of folk art were "Greek archeological treasures" and could not leave the country -- even the pewter chalice purchased for $17, a copy of a Russian icon painted last year and purchased for $50, and Russian books printed in the 18th century in Western Europe! On December 7 formal charges of smuggling were made and trial set for December 21.

The trial itself occurred on Saturday, December 21, at about 9 a.m. The courtroom was filled to capacity, with many monks, nuns, and priests in attendance, and people stood outside. The witnesses for the prosecution only testified in behalf of the accused. The attorney for the prosecution finally exclaimed, "This is the first time I've seen an accused without accusers!" At this all in the courtroom burst into applause and tried to run to kiss Fr. Panteleimon's hand. Once order was restored two defense witnesses testified, whereupon the judges said, "That's enough." There was no case against Fr. Panteleimon.

Notwithstanding this, after a recess the judges gave their decision: *Case postponed indefinitely* -- on the ground of the discrepancy between the two archeological authorities over the value of the articles concerned. The decision rendered all speechless. It became patently clear that there was no question of any crime at all.

Clearly, there is something going on behind the scenes here. To see what this is, one must first understand something of the situation today in the Greek Church -- both in Greece itself as well as in America.

This situation has already become so notorious as to attract the attention of non-Greeks and non-Orthodox. The December 4 issue of the widely-circulated Protestant "ecumenical" weekly, *The Christian Century*, contains two editorials on this subject: *Archbishop Ieronymos: Ecclesiastical Usurper*, and *Archbishop Iakovos Acts to Suppress Criticism*. The first describes the way in which the new Archbishop of Athens has "purified" the Church of Greece: by removing his opponents from office, often resorting to the worst kind of calumny to do so, with the aid of a special church tribunal which requires no evidence and allows no defense; by suppressing the publication of the protest against this by the theological faculty of the University of Athens; by appointing 30 new bishops from among his own supporters. The editorial does not go into the many other means being used to achieve the same end, nor does it specify who the "opponents" of Archbishop Ieronymos are; in fact, the "liberal," "ecumenical" Archbishop of Athens is attempting to crush the opposition of traditional Orthodoxy -- this is why the mail of noted "conservatives," both clergy and laymen, is censored, and why the voice of traditional Greek Orthodoxy, the newspaper *Typos*, has been virtually silenced by strict censorship of anti-ecumenical articles and by suspension of its editor.

As for Archbishop Iakovos, *The Christian Century* takes him to task for his recent suspension of Fr. Eusebius Stephanou, who had voiced rather mild criticism of the Archbishop in his monthly, *The Logos*. Here again, one could cite many more striking incidents the editorial does not mention: Archbishop Iakovos' continuing efforts to cause canonical difficulties for Fr. Neketas Palassis and for Fr. Panteleimon himself, both of whom are now outside his jurisdiction and within the Russian Church Outside of Russia; and the constant pressure exerted by the Archdiocese upon Greek parishes of the Old Calendar jurisdiction in America and Canada. And yet again: it is the conservatives and traditionalists, as well as those who lean even slightly in that direction, who occasion the wrath of the "ecumenical" Archbishop.

The same thing may be found in the case of yet a third "ecumencal" hierarch -- Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople. Several monks who refused to commemorate him have already been expelled from Mt. Athos, which falls within the Patriarch's jurisdiction, and now a list has been compiled of 30 monks who are soon to be expelled -- a list that includes the most articulate and outspoken traditionalists and anti-unionists.

To what does all this point, and what is Fr. Panteleimon's role in it? We are witnessing today in the Greek Church a virtual *"ecumenical" reign of terror*, in which all who dare to raise theit voices against the ecumenical movement and the (evidently) fast-approaching "union," are to be quickly and effectively silenced. It is therefore not in the least surprising that Fr. Panteleimon, a leading and increasingly influential representative of traditional Orthodoxy in America, should experience such persecution in the land ruled by the government which uncanonically placed Archbishop Ieronymos in office.

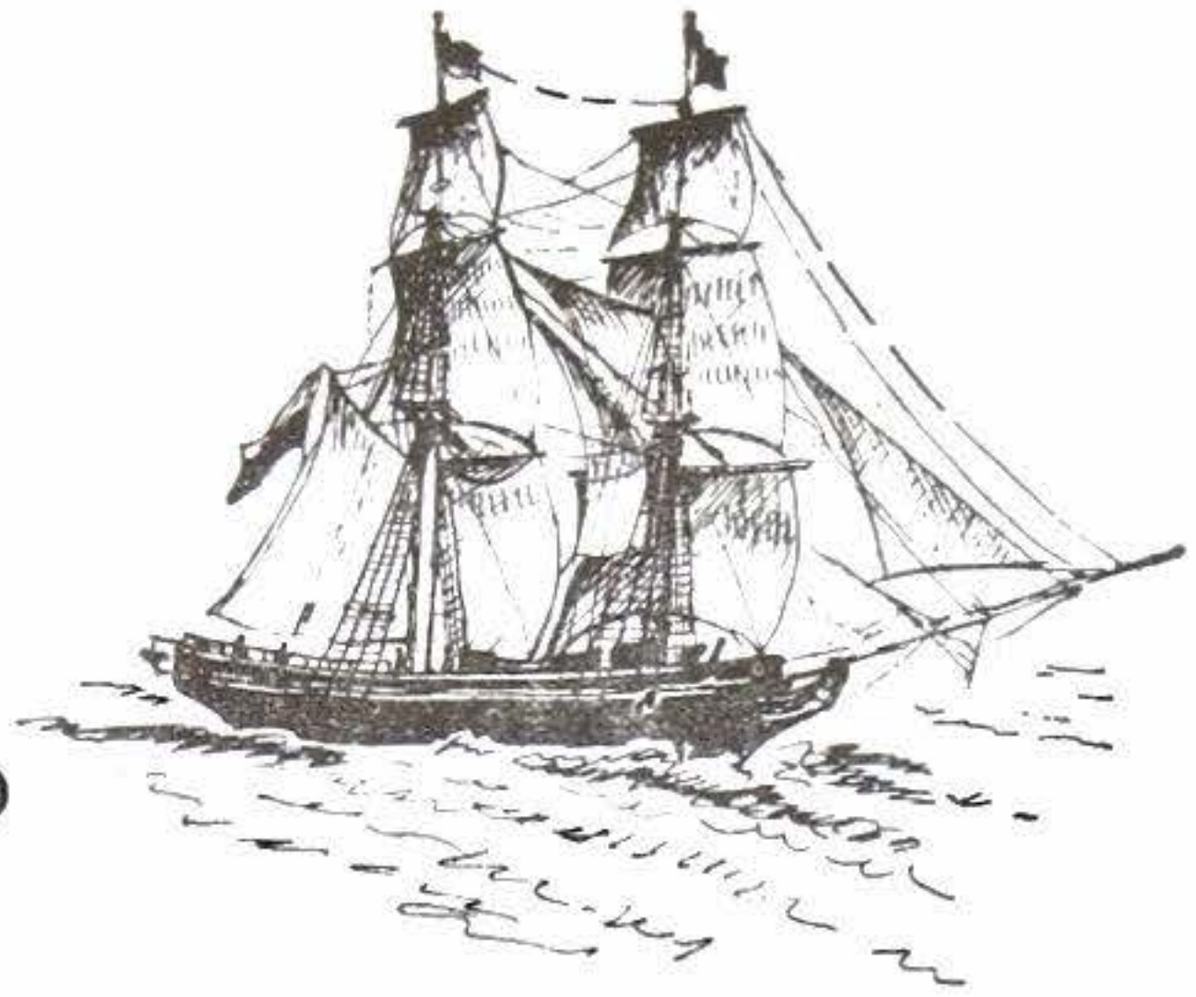
In all of this there is a lesson for us: the true face of ecumenism begins to show itself. All previous "unions" to which Orthodoxy has been subjected have been enforced at the cost of Orthodox blood; the new "union" is not to be an exception. The "unionist" hierarchs loudly proclaim that "nothing separates" them from Latins and Protestants; are we not also entitled to ask them -- what, then, separates you from our present-day confessors of the unchanging Orthodox Faith? Almost nothing, indeed, now separates apostate hierarchs from heretics; but it is *Orthodoxy itself* that separates them from the Orthodox faithful.

As the above pages were being printed, word came (December 31) that Fr. Panteleimon had been released -- evidently under pressure of the avalanche of letters and telegrams sent to the U.S. State Department and the Greek Government by Fr. Panteleimon's friends throughout the world. He has left Greece and his 7-week ordeal is at an end; but the situation that produced it remains the same. A letter Fr. Panteleimon wrote to his Monastery in America at the height of his ordeal (December 10) may be taken as a model of the Orthodox Christian response to the new persecutions of ecumenist "love".

They brought the doctor Sunday evening and he found my blood pressure very low; that is why I am dizzy when I get up on my feet. I thus spend most of my time lying down. I have started to translate the life of Holy New Martyr Anastasios and the Monk Daniel. Received all your letters and wept. People are calling from all over Greece to ask how I am. The Old Calendarist monasteries have all found out and are having vigils. They all congratulate me and say that I should rejoice that the new persecution against the Faithful has started from me -- I weep, for I know my sins. I may be innocent of the things they accuse me of but I have many sins, and now I pay -- just like in the life of St. Ephraim the Syrian. I thank our dear God that tears have come back to my eyes and I weep again like ancient days that I knew. Greetings to all. I try to liturgize daily but am not able any more. Glory be to God for all things. Pray, dear children.

With love of our Saviour Jesus and His Pure Mother,

Your Captive Elder.



A PILGRIMAGE TO
THE ORTHODOX

HOLY PLACES OF AMERICA

THE FOURTEENTH PILGRIMAGE

BLESSED FATHER HERMAN was the last surviving member of the first Orthodox Mission sent from Russia in 1794 to America, known as the Kodiak Mission. For over 40 years Fr. Herman faithfully labored among the Alaskan natives; this, together with his great ascetic labors, won him recognition as America's first Orthodox Saint, although he has yet to be officially canonized. Locally, however, he is venerated as a Saint who works great miracles...

The site of his ascetic labors is preserved on an island nine miles north of the city of Kodiak, known as Spruce Island. It is there that the virgin forest and the ocean mists sacredly conceal from the evils of this world the radiant splendor of Fr. Herman's significance. He was a representative of the great spiritual torrent that swept Holy Russia at the turn of the 19th century, inspiring -- under the influence of Paissy Velichkovsky's students -- the revival of the ancient spirituality. Fr. Herman brought with him to the New World the first edition of *Dobrotolyubie* (*Philokalia*); he brought the great tradition of practicing it; and with Christianity he brought to the Aleuts, and thus to all Americans, the way to a life of sanctity, which he lived and which knows no death...

Today, although his memory is occasionally mentioned, little is used of the great living power which Fr. Herman, being alive with the Omnipotent God, is able to kindle. His exemplary deeds of living faith to which Fr. Herman calls and which contain in themselves all that is necessary for true Orthodox spiritual awakening, lie idle far away in the Northern Hemisphere and only shine from the distance as if they were unreachable and not from the *God of the living*...

Father Herman's

SPRUCE ISLAND

NEAR KODIAK IN ALASKA

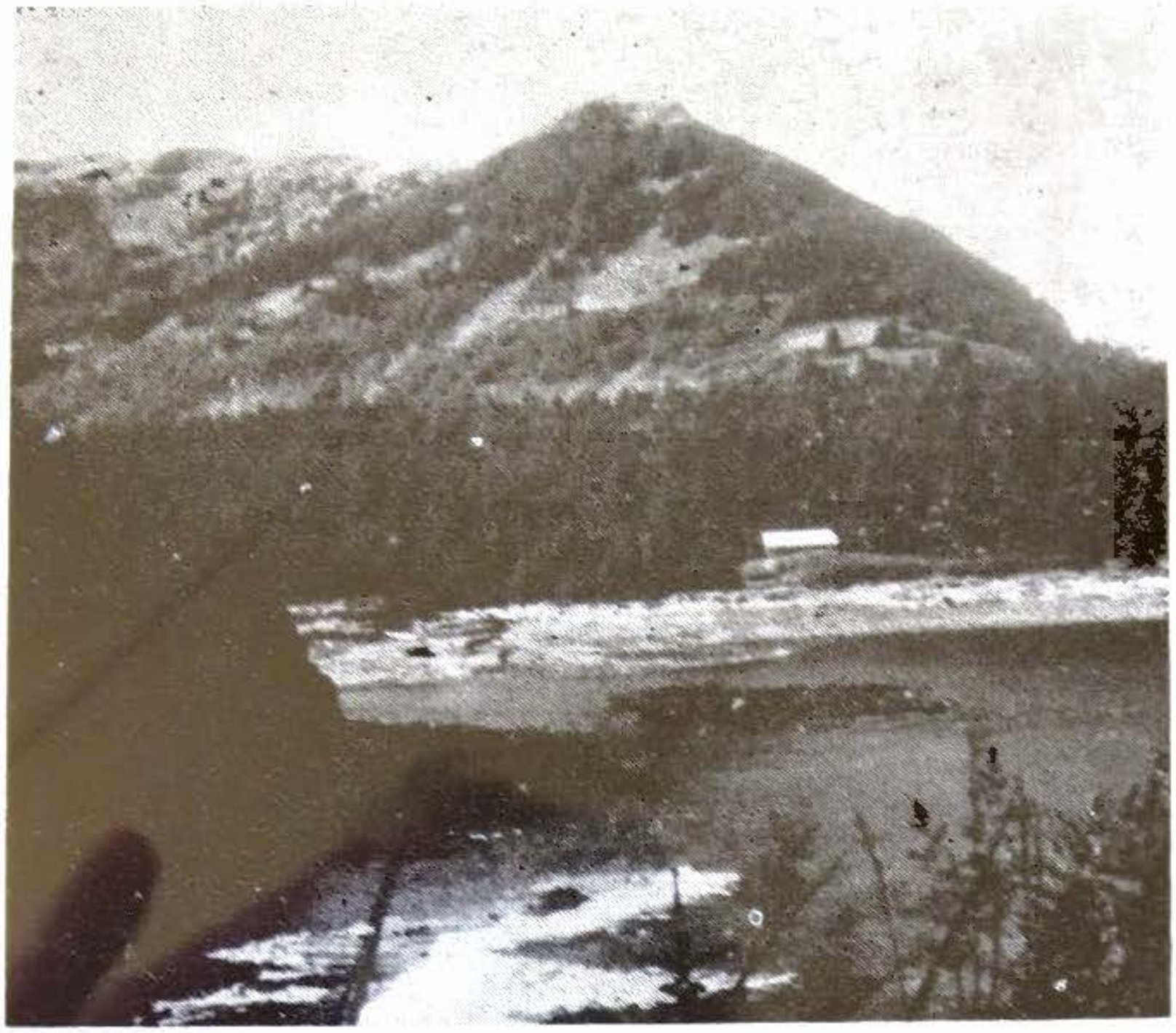
I am the lowest servant of these people
and am their nurse
FATHER HERMAN

ON THE EASTERN tip of the Island, 500 steps away from the landing beach on Monk's Lagoon, a winding path leads the pious pilgrim into a thickly overgrown forest where in a small clearing (the grounds of Fr. Herman's experimental garden) is located a small white wooden cabin, a chapel (see p. 278) built over the decayed little log cell where Fr. Herman lived and died. Next to it is another cabin which recently housed the living-quarters of the Rev. Archimandrite Gerasim (Schmaltz),[1] about whose coming almost a century ago Fr. Herman prophesied. Both of these structures were built by Fr. Gerasim; the whole preservation of the spiritual treasures of the Island is the work of a single man -- Fr. Gerasim, who moved to the Island in 1935 and lived there all alone amidst the murmur of the age-old spruce trees that saw the Saint. It was through Fr. Herman's intervention that Fr. Gerasim came to live there.

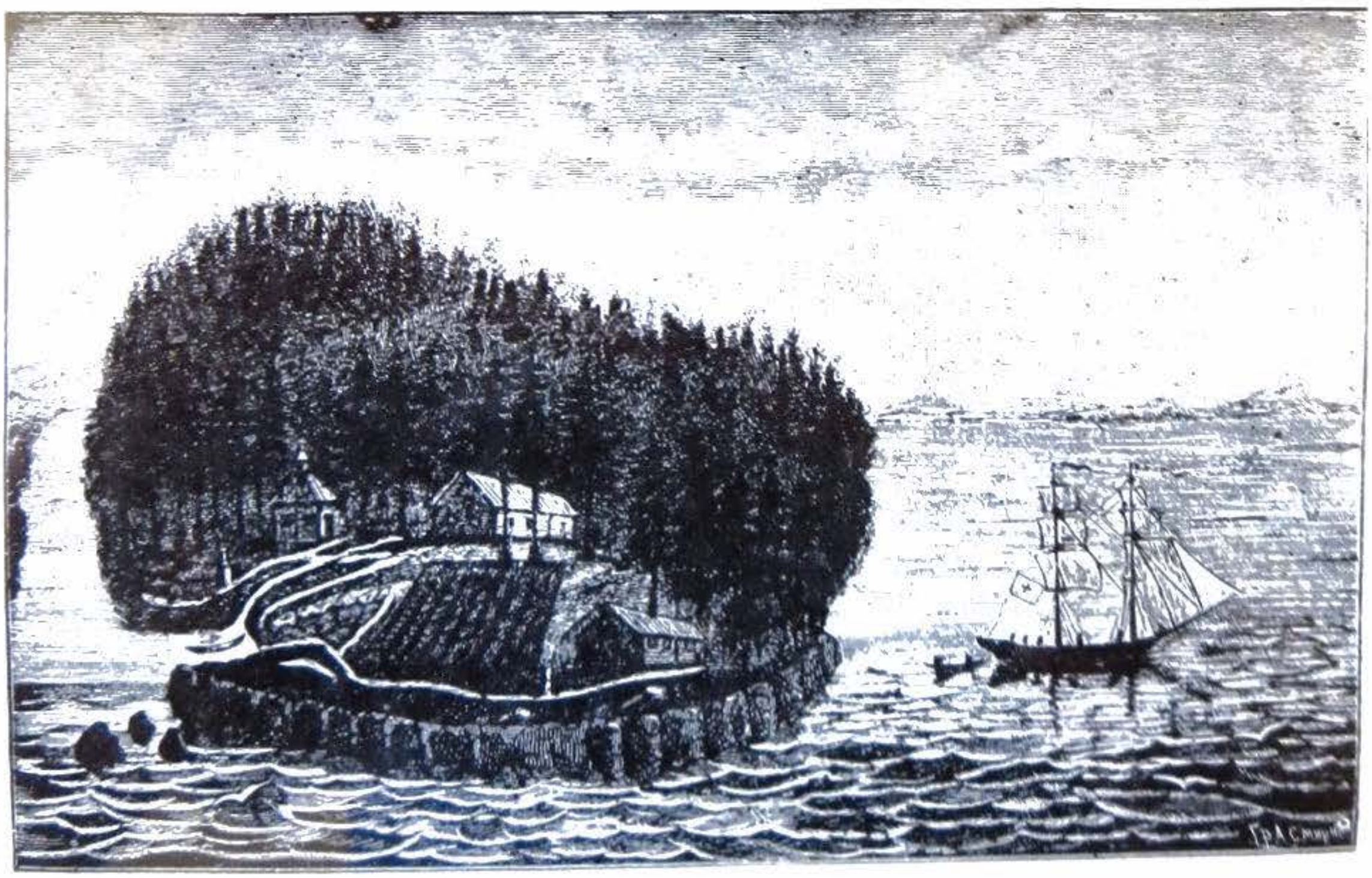
It is not determined when Fr. Herman first came to the Island, but he lived there periodically, in a cave which he dug himself, whenever he could be replaced at the Mission in Kodiak. With the transferrance of the Orphanage to the isle he stayed there permanently at some distance from the children's lodgings. He taught them to read and write and instructed in some crafts. He baked for them, fished, grew vegetables.

1. See *Father Herman Alaska's Saint* by F.A Golder, San Francisco, California, 1968

Fr. Herman's Cross



Mt. Herman towering over Monk's Lagoon or Icon Bay



Yanovsky's drawing of the Spruce Island settlement

Interior of the chapel, with sarcophagus of Fr. Herman at right

A HUNDRED STEPS farther into the forest beyond the site of Fr. Herman's ascetic labors, the winding path leads the pilgrim to a clearing, in the midst of which, against the sombre moss-green ancient ferns, a modest white chapel rises over the graves of Father Herman and his assistant, Monk Ioasaph. This church (see cover) was built at the turn of the century on funds given by Patriarch Tikhon, then Primate in America. With age, and especially due to the severely damp climate, the wooden structure had almost decayed when, in the late 30's, Father Gerasim restored it. When the foundation was being laid, the coffin with the remains of Fr. Herman was damaged, and the treasurable relics (which were preserved as bones) were transferred into a new coffin and placed in the chapel on the right side from the entrance. It was there that remarkable cases of miraculous intercession from prayer to Fr. Herman took place,[1] the number of which -- only God knows... Due to the terrible indifference to Christ's truth in our time, the Church so far does not have a worthy collection of at least a few of the hundreds of miracles[2] that the pious local inhabitants pass from mouth to mouth...

1. See *The Orthodox Word*, 1967, no. 1, p. 28.
2. *Ibid., 1967*, no. 3, p. 87.

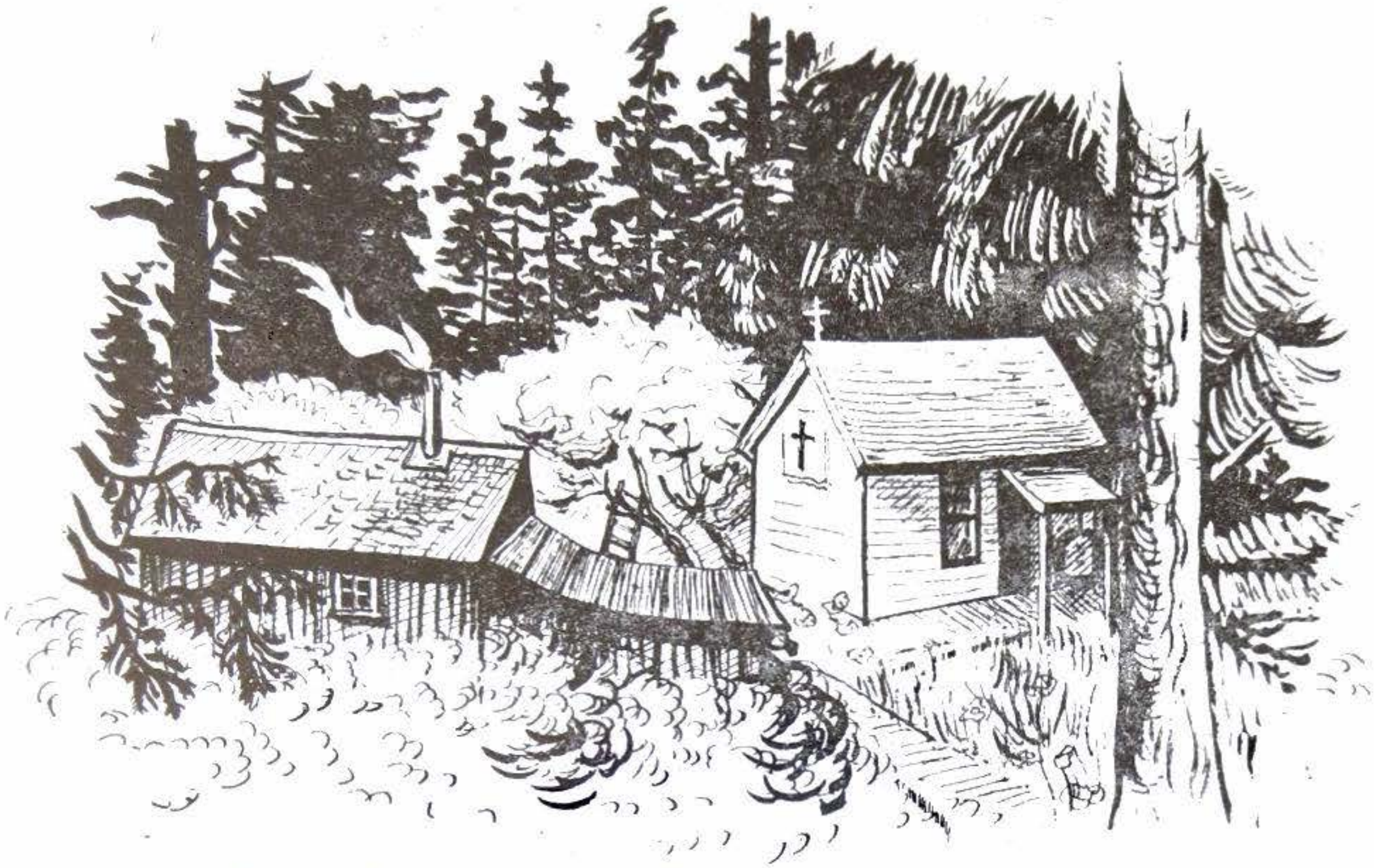
Fr. Herman's verigi (*chains*)

FORTUNATELY, some objects known to belong to Father Herman have been well preserved, and not without his personal wonderworking participation. Before 1943 his cross, cowl (*klobuk*), and chains were preserved in the parish church in Kodiak, Alaska. On June 17th of that year a fire burnt the building to the ground. In the morning these objects were found unharmed: the cross, which Fr. Herman gave his visitors to kiss, since he was not in priestly rank and could not give a blessing with his hand; the *klobuk*, the only object bearing traces of the fire; and the 15 pound chains with a cross and plaque in the form of an iron *paraman* worn constantly by Fr. Herman. Other objects known to exist, but lost as of now, were his staff and a *mantia* (monk's cloak). They were brought to the island and are preserved in the chapel built by Fr. Gerasim on the site of Fr. Herman's hut. A short distance west of this hut is the miracleworking spring of Fr. Herman.

Fr. Herman's klobuk

BLESSED FR. HERMAN, frail in body, was a spiritual giant exerting, in the name of Christ, God-given spiritual powers. His scarce hagiographical data testify that he possessed a great gift of clairvoyance; saw events at a distance; had such burning love for God in his heart that it would ignite others and transfigure them into a life fervent in Christ; could command the elements -- halt rising waters during a flood and stop a forest fire; and foretold some people's death as well as his own passing and the conditions under which it would occur and what would follow. He attained such sanctity that his life became a *converse with angels*! Such was America's first Orthodox missionary, a gift of Holy Russia to the New World.

The significance of Fr. Herman far exceeds what meets the common eye of today's observers. He managed to combine perfectly the two aspects of Orthodox monasticism, as only few saints did: the deep concentration of a hesychast, a desert-dweller, a recluse ascetic, with the many-sided busy activity of a self-sacrificing missionary, enduring the labors of the main functionary of the Kodiak Mission, conducting a grade school, founding the first Orthodox orphanage, conducting all the missionary correspondence, and finally being for many years the chief official representative of the First Orthodox Mission in America. Besides that he was a real father to the local Aleuts, calling them "beloved children." With his death he continued to be their father, for now he became their heavenly intercessor at the Throne of God.



The chapel (on the right) built on the site of the hut in which Father Herman died amid the fragrance of heavenly incense

IN THE BIOGRAPHY of Father Herman there occurs this incident. The Starets was asked: "How do you live alone in the forest, Father Herman? Don't you become bored?" He replied: "No! I am not alone there! God is there, as He is everywhere. Holy Angels are there. And can one become bored with them? With whom is converse better and more pleasant, with men or with Angels? Of course, with Angels!"

Aleuts relate that when Father Herman was still alive and lived on Spruce Island, the local inhabitants used to go to the Starets for some reason or other. And more than once it happened thus: they approached the chapel where he celebrated Divine services, and they heard superb choral singing, a multitude of voices singing. They wondered where the people had come from. And all this time the singing was clearly audible, and such harmonious, sweet singing... They opened the door into the little chapel, and there Fr. Herman stood alone reading, chanting in a loud voice, celebrating the Lord's service. And of course he was alone and there was no one there with him. Father Herman was not a priest, and he could only read and sing as on the cliros. And such a thing was noticed more than once. It was Angels of God who sang with him praise to the Lord...[1]

1. *Pravoslavny Blagovestnik*, No. *13, 1967*, p. *196*.

The repose of Father Herman: a painting by Archim. Serafim Oblivantzeff, 1929

YANOVSKY, Fr. Herman's spiritual son and first biographer, left the following data on the elder's death: "One day he ordered his pupil Gerasim to light candles before the icons and read the *Acts of the Apostles*. After some time, the face of the elder became radiant, and he loudly pronounced: "Glory to Thee, O Lord." Then he ordered Gerasim to stop reading and informed all that it was the will of God to prolong his life for another week. In a week, according to Fr. Herman's orders, the candles were lit again and the *Acts of the Apostles* read. Quietly he bent his head on Gerasim's chest, the cell became filled with fragrance, his face began to glow -- and Fr. Herman was no more! Thus blessedly he passed away in the sleep of the righteous in the 81st year of his much-suffering life, on December 13, 1837."

And ever since then the history of *New Valaam*, as Father Herman called his isle, has been that of an awesome desolation accessible only to the few chosen pilgrims who tread these sacred shores, but known and revered by faithful Orthodox throughout the world as the foremost Holy Place and spring of Holy Orthodoxy in America.

There were many attempts to cultivate these sites and settle them with churchmen, but all tragically failed due primarily to the lack of an adequate realization of the spiritual caliber of the original dweller.

THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

(*Continued from p. 233*)

those who reign and Lord of those who rule: His Kingdom is an eternal Kingdom and His dominion is unto ages and ages.

Desiring to make other beings also participants of His glory and blessedness, the Lord created angels and men, that they in union with God might have true joy and blessedness.

But when one of the first angels wished to become equal to God and to have glory and power identical to His, evil entered the world, for evil is everything opposed to God.

He who fell away from God became His eternal adversary -- satan -- for evil and good are incompatible. Those who followed him were deprived of glory and blessedness and became enemies of God.

From that time until now the implacable battle of the devil with God, of falsehood with Truth, of evil with Good, continues.

Man, created by God, deceived by the devil, went at first with him, but he could not find life and peace without God. All mankind was tormented, but it still went the way of evil and could not break the chains of sin, if the Son of God Himself had not come to earth to those who had fallen away from Him.

Having put on our nature, He united in Himself God and man and thus *the bar of enmity was thrown down*. The Lord by His Coming drew near to Himself men who had gone away from God; He illumined by His light their sinful darkness, and by His love He melted their frozen hearts.

Christ calls all to Himself, but not all respond to His voice. Whoever opens his heart to Him becomes His temple. The Lord comes to him and dwells in him. The heart then is filled with peace, and the soul with inexpressible blessedness and love; the will is strengthened in goodness, and the mouth glorifies God in heaven.

And it is this interior peace of man that the Angels announced to the shepherds of Bethlehem, the peace of a man who has made peace with God and become His dwelling.

Nothing is fearful to such a man; there is no power capable of overcoming him; there is no storm that can shake him; for with him is He than Whom there is none more powerful.

The battle between good and evil continues yet longer; it continues with yet greater force than before the Coming of Christ. There is

no agreement between Christ and Belial, no communion between light and darkness. The light has been divided between truth and falsehood, and the devil through the sons of darkness wishes to conquer those who have become sons of light. And the longer the battle continues, the fiercer it is. Sensing the approach of the eternal Kingdom of God, the devil bends all his efforts to continue his reign. But the storm which he has raised cannot sink the Ship of Christ.

Let the waves roar: they do not frighten those who hope in Him Who walked on the waves. The power of God strengthens ascetics and martyrs for the name of Christ. During ascetic labors painful for the body, and even the most terrible tortures, they sense a profound peace in their hearts: the body is tormented, but the soul rejoices; evil is done them, but they render good in return, and to hatred reply with love. Eternal blessedness in the Mansions of God awaits them; there together with the Angels they will eternally glorify God, themselves becoming participants of that Glory.

Let us not fear, brethren, the battle with evil! Let us uproot it from our hearts and souls, let us drive out of them ill-will and hatred, let us plant in them love toward God and neighbors. Let us not fear labors for the sake of God and toil for the sake of our neighbors! Let us not be shaken in heart, seeing how the godless tear to pieces those faithful to Christ! Let us turn our gaze to much-suffering Russia, waging a battle for Truth, and let us cry out: We send you our greetings of the Nativity, our suffering brethren!

Let us pray to Christ being born, for our brethren:

Strengthen, O Lord, those who suffer from the enslavers of Holy Russia, those who are deprived of the possibility of visiting Thy Temple, those whom they wish to compel to bow down to the devil!

Confirm in the Orthodox Faith those also of our brothers who are being deceived into falling away from it for the sake of earthly gain!

Preserve us all from the tempter and gather into one Thy flock, who with a single peace-making and loving heart and with one mouth sing:

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace in men of good will.

I invoke the blessing of God on you all and on all whom this epistle reaches, and I greet you on the Nativity of Christ!

CHRIST IS BORN!

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STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT & CIRCULATION

(*Act of October 23, 1962; Section 4369, Title 39, United States Code*)

1 Date of filing *September 29, 1968*
2 Title of publication *The Orthodox Word*
3 Frequency of issue *Bimonthly*
4 Location of known office of publication *6254 Geary Blvd, San Francisco, Calif 94121*
5 Location of the headquarters or general business offices of the publishers *Same as above*
6 Names and addresses of publisher, editor, and managing editor
Publisher *Orthodox Christian Books & Icons, 6254 Geary Blvd, San Francisco, Calif* 94121
Editors *Eugene Rose*, 2333 *Clement, San Francisco, Calif* 94121; *and Gleb Podmoshensky*, 2333 *Clement, San Francisco, Calif* 94121
Managing Editor *Eugene Rose, address same as above*
7 Owner *Orthodox Christian Books & Icons*, 6254 *Geary Blvd, San Francisco, Calif*
(*Eugene Rose*, 2333 *Clement, San Francisco, Calif*)
8 Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities *None*
9 For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at special rates *Not applicable*
10 Extent and nature of circulation

		Average no. copies each issue during last 12 months	Actual no. copies last single issue (July-August)
A	Total no. copies printed (*Net Press Run*)	1395	1531
B	Paid circulation		
	Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales	58	82
	Mail subscriptions	984	1039
C	Total paid circulation	1042	1121
D	Free distribution (including samples) by mail, carrier or other means	82	99
E	Total distribution (sum of C and D)	1124	1220
F	Office use, left-over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing	271	311
G	Total (sum of E and F)	1395	1531

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.
Eugene Rose, Editor